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## A STUDY OF RAJA TODAR MAL'S TWELVE REGULATIONS

KUMUD RANJAN DAS

It is known from Abu-l-Fazl that, on the order of Emperor Akbar, Raja Todar Mal who was made the Head of the *Diwan* (*Ashraf-i-Diwan*) and virtual *Vakil* (Prime Minister) of the empire, formulated twelve regulations for removing various existing difficulties and ensuring smooth running of the revenue administration. These rules were duly approved by the Emperor on 3rd March, 1582 and then put into force.<sup>1</sup>

There are two versions of Todar Mal's Twelve Regulations. One is contained in a MS of the *Akbarnama* preserved in the British Museum<sup>2</sup> and the other is in the Persian Text of the *Akbarnama* as published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal<sup>3</sup>. Our study is on the basis of both the versions.

The Twelve Regulations throw considerable light on the various features of Akbar's revenue administration. These relate to organisational structure, procedure of measurement, unit of assessment, method of collection, loan, relief and the working of the central revenue department. These Regulations also sought to remedy the defects existing there prior to their formulation and adoption and reveal the Raja's ideals and principles regarding revenue administration.

### (i) *Organisational Structure*

Most of the Twelve Regulations deal with various functions of the collectors, known variously as the *krori* or '*amil*' or '*amalguzar*'.<sup>4</sup> These related to survey and measurement, assessment and collection,

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1 A.N. (*Akbarnama*) III pp. 381-83; Add 27,247. ff. 3316-3326

2 Add. 27,247. f 331b-332b.

3 A.N. III. pp. 381-83.

4 The terms '*amil*' and '*krori*' are used in the version contained in the MS of British Museum. Add. 27,247. f 331b. The term '*amalguzar*' is used in the printed Persian Text published by A.S.B. A.N. III. p. 381

loan, relief and extension of cultivation. Since the Regulations treated the *pargana* as the unit of revenue administration it may be held that the *pargana* constituted the jurisdiction of these officers. This view is also corroborated by Articles X of Amir Fath Ullah Shirazi's Recommendations, formulated in Akbar's 30th regnal year/ 1585-86, which states : "After the collectors ('amils) have been removed, they remain in the *pargana* for the purpose of collecting arrears".<sup>5</sup> This indicates that the 'amil was appointed over a *pargana* and thus confirms our assumption.

It is well known that the *krori* experiment was originally introduced in 1575. In that year most of the lands of the empire was converted into *khalsa* and 182 'amils were appointed to administer them. Each of them was put over an extent of territory yielding (a revenue of) one *krone* of *dam* and thus appeared the term *krori*.<sup>6</sup> But the experiment did not work well. Todar Mal's Regulations indicate that *krori* became the nomenclature of the collector of a *pargana*. It is also evident from the Ain's provincial statistics that none of the *pargana* yielded a revenue of one *krone* of *dam* which was the basis of the designation, *krori*. The exact date when the original *krori* system broke down is, however, not known. But a critical study of the Twelve Regulations of Todar Mal would make it abundantly clear that by March, 1582 when the Twelve Regulations were formulated and adopted, the *krori* lost his original jurisdiction and the very basis of the designation and that the *krori's* jurisdiction was reduced to *pargana* only. In other words the *krori* had just become the collector in the *pargana*.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it seems from the simultaneous use of the three terms—*krori*, 'amil and 'amalguzar—that they were synonymous i.e., their rank, position and power were

5 Articles III—IX of T.M's (Todar Mal's) Regulations A.N III p. 458; Eng. Tr p. 691

6 A.N. III. p. 117; T.A. (*Tabaqat-i-Akbari*) II. pp 300, 301; M.T. (*Muntakhal-ut-Twarikh*), II. p. 189

7 Dr. Irfan Habib writes : "When the *karori* experiment was wound up and the assignments began to be granted again, the name *karori* still stuck to the 'amil or 'amalguzar of the *khalsa* set over a *pargana* or a group of *parganas*." In the note below he states : "This is nowhere explicitly stated, but is clear from the numerous references to the *karori* in the records of the subsequent period" *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*. p. 275 and n 10. But we have shown on the basis of the document of Akbar's reign that by March, 1582 the *krori's* jurisdiction was reduced to *pargana* only and this continued to be so.

same.<sup>8</sup> The *krori* or '*amil*' or '*amalguzar*' had to send petitions and reports of their work to the headquarters and were appointed by the central government. They used to get payment in 4 instalments in cash; of which  $\frac{1}{4}$ th used to be withheld till the collection of all dues from the cultivators<sup>9</sup>

Besides the collector there were a series of officials viz., *bitikchi* (writer and accountant), *karkun* (writer and registrar of account), *fotadar* (treasurer), *tahvildar* (treasurer), *qanungo*, *chaudhuri* (headman of a village or a group of villages) *muqaddam* (village-headman), *kalantar* (chief man of a village or town), *patwari* (village accountant), *tahsildar* (collector), *mustaufi* (auditor of accounts), *mutsuddi* (deputy or agent of the government), *amin* (surveyor), *saraff* (money-changer) etc. The Regulations yield very meagre information regarding the functions of these officials. But these are well known from other sources.

It is evident from the Regulations that prior to their adoption there were two *bitikchis* attached to each collector ('*amil*' or *krori* or '*amalguzar*'). In order to check oppression, details of which are given later, the Regulations prescribed that one instead of two *bitikchis* should be appointed. This means that there would be only one *bitikchi* under each collector from 1582 onwards.<sup>10</sup> The *bitikchi*, according to the *Ain* (*Ain-i-Akbari*) used to assist the collector in all his works and was indispensable to him<sup>11</sup>

The *fotadar* used to receive collection and give receipt to the *ra'iyat*. Every year he and the collector used to divide the total collection in four parts and send three parts to the head office and were allowed, for reasons not specified, to retain the last instalment i.e. the balance of one-fourth after the complete collection of the dues. The *fotadar* was sometimes called *tahvildar*. He used to keep

8 It is clear from the above note that Dr. Irfan Habib also holds this view. Dr. A. L. Srivastava seems to hold the same opinion. He writes that the '*amil* of the *pargana* is sometimes called '*karori*'. Further he states: "The '*amalguzar* or collector of which there was one in each *pargana*, collects land revenue directly from the individual cultivator". *Akbar The Great*, II, pp. 140,189.

9 Articles I. IV—IX of T.M's Regulations.

10 Article II of T.M's Regulations.

11 *Ain-i-bitikchi*, *Ain*, I. p. 288

separate the worn out coins deposited in the treasury.<sup>12</sup> The functions of the *fotadar* or *khazandar* have been elaborately given in the *Ain*.<sup>13</sup>

The functions of the *qanungo*,<sup>14</sup> *chaudhuri*,<sup>15</sup> and *kalantar*<sup>16</sup> have not been described in the Regulations, but they are fairly well known from other sources.

The *Ain* states that under Akbar there was one *qanungo* for every *pargana*. He was "the refuge of the husbandman" and paid by the government. There were three classes of *qanungo*. The salary of the first was fifty rupees : of the second, thirty ; of the third, twenty.<sup>17</sup> The functions of the *chaudhuris* and *kalantars* have not been spelt by the *Ain*.

The *muqaddam* or village headman used to supply notes (perhaps, showing the revenue to be taken from the cultivators) on the basis of which revenues would be collected and stand as surety for the loans which were to be given to the distressed cultivators.<sup>18</sup> The *muqaddam*, according to the *Ain*, used to keep copies of rent rolls by means of which the *bitikchis* used to make collection on behalf of the collectors.<sup>19</sup>

12 Articles VII, IX and X of T.M's Regulations.

13 *Ain-i-khazanadar*, *Ain*. I pp. 289 ; also Wilson p. 160

14 It is known from Abbas that before Sher Shah's time "there was a *qanungo* in every *pargana*, from whom was ascertained the present, past and probable future state of *pargana*". Elliot. IV. 414 ; The *qanungo* used to supply all information concerning the revenue, area statistics and rates of produce and revenue, practices and customs. The office was usually hereditary but an imperial recognition was necessary for an incumbent. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms* 1968. p. 260 ; W. H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*. p. 276 ; I. Habib. pp. 288-91.

15 *Chaudhuri* was an important official of the government and was invariably a *zamindar*. His work was largely directed towards the collection of revenue. Usually he collected the revenue from the *muqaddams* and *zamindars* and handed it over to the collector. He, in co-operation of *muqaddams*, used to stand as surety for the repayment of *taccavi* loans. The office was usually hereditary but imperial recognition was to be taken by each incumbent. Wilson. p. 105 ; I. Habib. p. 291-94.

16 The chief men of a village were termed as *kalantaran* (plural of *kalantar*). I. Habib. p. 128.

17 *Ain*. I-O. 300.

18 Article, III and IX of Todar Mal's Regulations.

19 *Ain*. I. p. 288

The functions of the *patwari*, as revealed by the Regulations, were to prepare the list of cultivated lands and cultivators.<sup>20</sup> The *Ain* states that the *patwari* "is a writer employed on the part of the cultivator. He keeps an account of receipts and disbursements and no village is without one".<sup>21</sup>

Both the *muqaddam* and *patwari* used to countersign the register of collection to be sent to the head office by the collector. This procedure was adopted, perhaps, to prevent the collector from making any fraud in the list of collection.<sup>22</sup>

The *tahsildar* used to collect taxes and act as an intermediary between the collector ('amil) and the cultivators.<sup>23</sup> The *Ain* also refers to the similar function of the *tahsildar*.<sup>24</sup>

The functions of the *mustaufi*,<sup>25</sup> *mutsuddi*<sup>26</sup> and *saraff* are not explicitly mentioned in the Regulations, but from the available evidence in the *Ain* we learn that these terms respectively meant the auditor of account, the deputy or official of government and moneychanger.

The *amin* was the head of the measurement party. The measurement party (*zabitān*) was composed of *amin*, *gumasta* (agent), *karkun* (clerk) and three *tanab-kishan* (measure-holders).<sup>27</sup>

#### (ii) *Procedure of Measurement*

The measurement was made when the crops were standing. The number of measuring parties varied according to the amount of land. It seems that the previous years' statistics used to act as the guide in this matter. Two hundred (200) *bighas* at the *Kharif*

20 Article IX of Todar Mal's Regulations.

21 *Ain*. I. pp. 300-01. Wilson. p. 460

22 Article IX of Todar Mal's Regulations

23 *Ibid.*, Article VII.

24 *Ain*. I p. 288; also Wilson. p 500

25 The officer of the department in which, under the Muhammadan government, the account of ex-collectors or farmers of revenue were examined. Wilson. p. 358.

26 The *mutasuddis* were officials or agents of the government. Wilson, p. 359.

27 Article XII of Todar Mal's Regulations.

(autumn) season "when the days are short" and two hundred and fifty (250) bighas at the time of *Rabi* (spring) "when the days are long" were measured every day.<sup>28</sup> The measurement was conducted in an intelligent manner with special attention to the produce and quality of the land. It should be borne in mind that measurement, classification of land and crop-rates commuted into cash-rates were the three essential features of *zabt* system under the Mughals. As it was necessary to know the kind of the crop and land in order to determine the prices or cash-rates, they were considered and ascertained during measurement. The measurement party used to receive 24 *dams* daily as their fee.<sup>29</sup>

We find mention of all these points in the *Ain* except the number of measuring parties and the time when the measurement should be made.<sup>30</sup>

### (iii) *Unit of Assessment*

The Regulations state nothing about the method of assessment. Nevertheless they indicate the unit of assessment. While usually the individual cultivator was the basic unit of assessment, in some cases the village was treated as the unit. The *Ain* indicates that the cultivator was treated as the unit. "The 'analguzar', according to it, "should not entrust the *nasaq*<sup>31</sup> to headman of the village lest it gives rise to remissness and incompetence and undue authority be conferred on highhanded oppressors, but he should deal with each husbandman, present his demand, and separately and civilly receive his dues"<sup>32</sup>.

The annual individual assessment necessitated annual measurement of each holding. However, it involved much labour and time.

28 *Ibid*

Here seems to occur a slip of pen because the days are actually long at the time of *Kharif* season and shorter at the time of *Rabi*. In the *Ain* Abu-l-Fazl has rightly mentioned that "in spring (*Rabi*) they did not measure less than 200, nor in autumn less than 250 bighas". *Ain*. I p 301.

29 Article IV and XII of *Todar Mal's* Regulations.

30 *Ain* I. pp. 285-87, 301.

31 *Nasaq* is a method of assessment: but it is, as Dr. Irfan Habib writes, "often not treated as an independent method of assessment at all but only as a handmaid of other methods" I Habib p 215.

32 *Ain*. I. p. 286; Eng Tr II p. 47.

It is, therefore, improbable that this was universally practised. To avoid the time consuming and laborious process of annual measurement article III of the Regulations prescribed the establishment of *nasaq* when there would be no necessity of annual measurement and the cultivated area, once recorded, would be utilised for annual assessment. This indicates that the area assigned to any assignee remained the same. The area assigned to a village and not to individual could remain unchanged and this strongly suggests that sometimes the village was the unit of assessment. Again, article IX instructed the *mutsuddis* and *diwanians* (officials of the revenue department) to be cautious of the rebels and evil-doers of the village who used to exploit the small *ri'aya* by transferring the revenue demand due on them to the latter. It seems that these influential persons were entrusted with the distribution of revenue demand among the cultivators of the village. This also suggests that the *jama'* of the village was assessed. In other words, the village was sometimes considered as the unit of assessment.

#### (iv) *Method of Collection*

The Regulations reveal that the ideal of collection was to induce the cultivators to voluntarily deposit the revenue directly to the treasury and obtain a receipt for it. This would help to remove the intermediaries. To facilitate this process the collector used to fix a period when the cultivators would submit their dues, otherwise the revenue was collected by the collector through his subordinate officials viz., *tahsildar* etc. and deposited in the treasury and the treasurer would give receipt to the cultivator. If the *fotadar* (treasurer) or *karkun* (clerk and accountant) failed to give the receipt or the cultivator failed to obtain it, the responsibility would lie with the collector. The *patwari* and the *muqaddam* had to countersign the register of collection before sending it to the head-quarters.<sup>33</sup> The Regulations also prescribed progressive payments for three different classes of land viz., *parauti*, *chachar* and *banjar* and the proportion to be taken in different years from each of them. These do not specifically refer to the method of collection in the *polaj* land, but it seems from the *Ain* that here the rate followed the Schedule of Sher Shah.<sup>34</sup> All these have found place in the *Ain*. It should be noted that there are some variations between Todar Mal's Regulations and the *Ain* in the details of the rates of revenue

33 Articles VII to IX of T.M's Regulations.

34 Articles III of T.M's Regulations.

to be taken from different classes of land in different years and also in the periods when they are lain fallow.<sup>35</sup>

(v) *Loans*

The Regulations provided for grant of loans to the distressed or destitute cultivators who possessed neither seed nor cow, on receipt of bonds from the *mugaddams* or respectable persons so that it could be recovered everytime. It seems that if a destitute cultivator wished to take loan, he had to put the *mugaddam* or a respectable man of the village as his surety.<sup>36</sup> The loan was to be recovered in two instalments—one at the *Kharif* or autumn harvest according to the capability of the loanee and the remainder at *Rabi* or spring harvest.<sup>37</sup> This may be compared with the instructions given to the 'amalguzar in the *Ain*, that he should assist the needy husbandman with advances of money and recover them gradually.<sup>38</sup>

(vi) *Relief*

The Regulations also provide that if a *mauza* experienced damage or loss due to any natural calamity, the collector would visit and send a detailed report along with the necessary petition for relief after inquiry. On receiving this report the head office would appoint an *amin* or a *mutasuddi*, perhaps, to ascertain the amount of land damaged or destroyed and on the basis of their report necessary relief was granted or sanctioned.<sup>39</sup> The provision of relief is repeated in the *Ain*.<sup>40</sup>

The Regulations were applicable alike to *khalsa* and *jagir* lands.<sup>41</sup> They indicate that the officials of the revenue department under the imperial *Diwan* used to act on the basis of the inventories supplied weekly by the collectors and the daily ledger of collection sent month by month used to be kept as records.<sup>42</sup> It seems from this that the central revenue department was very large and had

35 *Ain*. I pp. 299-303.

36 Article III of T.M's Regulations.

37 Article III of T.M's Regulations

38 *Ain* I. p. 285.

39 Article V of T.M's Regulations.

40 *Ain*. I pp. 286-87

41 Article VI of T.M's Regulations.

42 *Ibid.* Article IV

many officials and clerks. It is evident from the Regulations that the lowest unit of revenue administration was the *mauza*.<sup>43</sup> But nothing is said in the Regulations as to how it was administered.

(vii) *Defects and Remedies* :

The Regulations throw considerable light on the nature of the prevailing revenue administration by exposing the defects therein and suggesting remedies.

The *kroris* and 'amils used to oppress the cultivators (*ri'aya*) by taking from the latter much in excess of the stipulated dues as sanctioned by the *dastur-ul-'amal* (schedule of rules of the government). Article I sought to bring the wicked collectors (*kroris* and 'amils or 'amalgazars) to book and to give relief to the aggrieved *ra'iyat*. Even the *bitikchis* attached to each collector used to torture the *ri'aya* and practically there existed a ring of oppressive and corrupt officials in every *mauza*. Article II aimed at breaking this ring. The torture and oppression of the revenue officials (*kroris*, *muqaddams*, *chaudhuris*) sometimes became so severe that the *ri'aya* had to leave their place or keep their lands out of cultivation. In order to stop the fall in cultivation and the emigration of cultivators, the *mutasuddis* were instructed through article IV to work "in such a way so that the land could again be cultivated and the loss be compensated". Again, to check irregularities in the maintenance of accounts of collection it was also ordered through this article that the recorded inventories should be sent weekly and the daily journal of collection month by month to the head-office. The revenue officials also seemed to exploit and cheat the *ri'aya* by not giving receipts against the collection and by making fraudulent list of cultivators and cultivated lands. Articles VII and IX, therefore, asked the revenue officials to give receipt to the *ra'iyat* against the payments. Precaution against the submission of fraudulent list was also taken through article IX. It is also revealed from articles VI and VII that the revenue officials used to neglect their duties and did not protect the *ri'aya* from the torture and exploitation of rebels and evil-doers and also neglected to compensate the *ri'aya* for the losses incurred

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43 Ibid. Articles IV to VI, VIII and IX. This is confirmed by a contemporary revenue document, *Haqiqat-i-Raqba Todar Mali Pargana Bhagalpur Sarkar Monghyr Mazaf Subah Bihar 1001 Fasli* (1593-94) State Archives. Bihar. Stock no. 1690.

by them. To make the revenue officials dutiful, steps were also taken. But there is difference in opinion as to the nature of the steps between the two versions. According to the British Museum MS  $\frac{1}{4}$ th part of the total collection was allowed for the use of the *krori* and *fotadar* when there would be no dues from the *ri'aya* while according to the printed Persiar Text  $\frac{1}{4}$ th part of the salary of the collector used to be withheld till the complete collection of dues from the *ri'aya* (Article VII). Article VI asked the *sipahsalar*, *faujdar*, *jaigirdar* and *krori* to chastise the rebels and protect the *ri'aya*. Moreover, it was arranged through article IX to reward the dutiful officers. Irregularities were also practised in giving loans to the destitute *ri'aya* and in recovering the same and also in reporting about the natural calamities. Article III sought to remove these defects.

In order to remove malpractices and avoid the difficulty in measuring land at every harvest, article III asked to establish a *nasaq* when there would be no necessity of regular measurement. As measurement of cultivated land was sometimes carried out improperly, Article IV prescribed the procedure as to how the measurement should be conducted. To check the negligence of the measurement-parties and to make them dutiful article XII prescribed the minimum amount of land to be measured daily at every harvest-season and also made arrangement to give standard emoluments. It was also aimed to prevent the revenue officials from extorting *zabitana* or *jaribana* (measurement fee) from the *ri'aya* according to their will.

Anomalies prevailed in currency as different types of coins were in circulation. There was difference in the tentative value of new and old coins. Disparities also prevailed in accepting the range of deficiency in weight of the coins and the value thereof. Article X standardised the worth of different coins-new and old—and fixed the ratio of deficiency in weight and thereby removed the difficulties in receiving and making payments in cash.<sup>44</sup>

#### (viii) *Ideals and Principles*

Thus the Twelve Regulations not only made the revenue administration smooth and removed most of the existing defects but

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44 For all the articles of T M's Regulations see Add 27, 247, ff. 331b-332b; A. N. III. pp. 381-83.

also revealed Todar Mal's ideals and principles regarding land revenue administration. His prime aim was to increase the state's income from the land revenue to the maximum. As a dutiful officer he tried to place Akbar's empire on a sound footing by making the economy of the state sound. As in the past the state used to derive its main income from the land revenue, so the strength and weakness of the state's economic system depended upon the merits and demerits of the land-revenue system. Todar Mal realized this perfectly well and acted accordingly.

In order to augment the state's income from land revenue and to make its realization steady and regular it was necessary to maintain justice and discipline in its administrative machinery. The Raja rightly realized that this depended upon the condition of the cultivators and behaviour and attitude of various revenue officials, especially the collectors. It was almost the habit of the revenue officials, in medieval times, to oppress the cultivators ignoring the rules and orders of the government. In a general way it may be stated that the liberal ideas of Kautilya<sup>45</sup> and generous policy pursued by Sher Shah under whom he had served, helped and inspired him to endeavour to understand the working and defects of the existing land revenue system. Sher Shah's ideals had been amply reflected in his address to the *chaudhuris* and headmen : "I know well that the cultivation depends on the humble peasants, for if they be ill off, they will produce nothing, but if prosperous, they will produce much. I know the oppressions and exactions of which you have been guilty towards the cultivators".<sup>46</sup> Again, "the cultivators are the source of prosperity. I have encouraged them and sent them away, and shall always watch over their condition, that no man may oppress and injure them; for if a ruler cannot protect humble peasantry from the lawless, it is tyranny to exact revenue from them".<sup>47</sup>

Like Sher Shah, Todar Mal also tried, through various rules, to relieve the cultivators of oppression and torture and bring the wicked and oppressive officials to book. He also instructed the officials (*sipahsalar, faujdar, jaigirdar, krari*) to protect the cultivators from the torture and extortion of the rebels and evil-doers. Moreover, the revenue officials were directed to behave with the cultivators

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45 *Arthashastra* pp 46, 48.

46 Elliot. pp 313-14

47 Ibid. p. 314.

sympathetically and thus create an atmosphere in which the latter would come, of their own accord, and deposit the revenue.<sup>48</sup>

Although the Raja was sympathetic and generous to the cultivators, he was very particular in collecting maximum revenue. He was not to tolerate any negligence on the part of either the revenue officials or the cultivators. He arranged to punish the recalcitrant and trouble making cultivators and also to reward the well-behaved officials and cultivators.<sup>49</sup>

In this regard also he was following Sher Shah: "It is right for a ruler to show leniency to the cultivators at the period of measurement, and to have a regard to the actual produce; but when the time of payment comes he should show no leniency, but to collect the revenue with all strictness. If he perceives the cultivators are evading payment, he should so chastise them as to be an example to others not to act in the same way".<sup>50</sup>

As the state used to take a certain share of the produce as the revenue, the increase of production was another means to augment the state's income. Todar Mal applied various means to increase the production. First of all, in order to enthuse the cultivators to cultivate more and more lands he prescribed that only a nominal amount of the yield per *bigha* should be taken as revenue from the *banjar* land. Secondly, to increase the productivity of three classes of land of comparatively inferior fertility, viz., *parauti*, *chachar* and *banjar*, he prescribed a gradual progressive assessment. Further, he instructed to help the destitute cultivators with loans so that they could cultivate their lands and to give relief to the cultivators in times of distress and calamity. Moreover, by leaving a portion of the yield per *bigha* unassessed when there seemed to be a good harvest the Raja allowed the cultivators to enjoy, at least, some fruits of the good production.<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion it can be said that his policy was based on the principle that the state's wealth and prosperity depended upon the welfare and prosperity of cultivation and of the cultivators.

48 Articles I, II, VI and VIII of T.M's Regulations

49 Articles III, IV, VI and XI of T.M's Regulations.

50 Elliot. IV pp. 313-14.

51 Articles III, IV and V of T.M's Regulations.

(ix) *Importance*

The Twelve Regulations of Todar Mal set a standard for future administrators to follow. Several subsequent regulations in the empire were promulgated or formulated on this model. Almost all these regulations were incorporated in the *Ain* compiled in 1595-96.<sup>52</sup> These were looked upon as a model even after a century later, by Aurangzeb. In his *farman* to Rasikdas *Krori* Aurangzeb ordered him to ascertain "what was the system of revenue collection in the reign of Akbar under the *diwani* of Todar Mal".<sup>53</sup> He was also to inquire whether the amount of *sair cess* remained the same as under the regulations or was increased at His Majesty's (Aurangzeb's) accession and also to ascertain the amount of cultivated *mauzas* and desolate ones and the causes of desolation. Articles II, IV, VI, VIII, IX and XII of this *farman* were promulgated on the line of Todar Mal's Regulations. The aim declared in the preamble of this *farman*, was to augment cultivation and the welfare of the cultivators and the people at large.<sup>54</sup>

The importance of Todar Mal's Regulations lies in the fact that their application under a strict and dutiful imperial *Wazir* like the Raja reduced the oppression and extortion of the revenue officials to a great extent and gave relief and security to the cultivators. It is evident from Articles II, IV and V of Mir Fath-Ullah Shirazi's recommendation made in Akbar's 30th regnal year/1585-86, that whatever oppression and torture continued was due to the non-adherence to some of the Twelve Regulations. The Mir suggested the remedies almost on the line of articles I and IX of Todar Mal's Regulations.<sup>55</sup>

Further, the significance of the Raja's Regulations becomes also clear when we find that oppression and tyranny of the officials increased almost continually after the Raja's death. In consequence cultivation decreased and there was large scale emigration of the cultivators.

S. J. Xavier states about Agra in September, 1609, that the tyranny of the Mogoles (Mughals) has ruined it and about Gujrat

52 *Ain*. I. pp. 285-94, 297-303.

53 Jadunath Sarkar, *Mughal Administration* (4th ed.), p. 192.

54 *Ibid* p. 190.

55 A. N. III pp. 457-58.

in December, 1615, that its conditions had deteriorated much since the country fell into the hands of the Mughals as the lands were much spoiled due to their oppressions.<sup>56</sup>

During Jahangir's reign, according to Pelsaert, the peasants were so severely oppressed that the lands lied unsown and grew into wilderness.<sup>57</sup>

Geleynsen, another foreign observer, writes about Ahmadabad and its neighbourhood in 1629 that the annual revenue was formerly more than the present, "but the peasants, from whom all of it must come, are more oppressed than formerly, frequently abscond and cannot pay the title so well as in former times; consequently much land is left unsown and the revenue has decreased and cannot now yield as much as formerly".

Further, he writes that "there is little difference between them and the serfs such are found in Poland ..."<sup>58</sup>

It is known from Sadiq Khan's account that during Shahjahan's reign vast lands became completely depopulated owing to the natural calamities, the rebellious *zamindars* and the cruelty of the officials. Inspite of the efforts of the emperor and his able ministers the land appeared more desolate than in the time of Jahangir.<sup>59</sup>

Signs of official tyranny during the reign of Aurangzeb are found in his *farman* to Rasikdas *krori* and Muhammad Hashim.<sup>60</sup> They may also be gleaned from Bernier who states that "considerable portion of good land remains untilled from the want of labourers" many of whom "perish in consequence of the bad treatment they receive from the Governors" or are left no choice but to "abandon the country".<sup>61</sup>

One of the reasons of this continuous rise of official tyranny and oppression seems to be the non-observance of Todar Mal's Regula-

56 J.A. S.B. 1927. pp. 121, 125.

57 Pelsaert. *Remonstrantie* Eng. Tr. by W H Moreland. Cambridge, 1925. p 47.

58 JIH IV pp 78-79.

59 Sadiq Khan, *Shahjahan-nama*, f 10a-b.

60 Jadunath Sarkar. *Mughal Administration* (4th ed.) pp 176-98

61 Bernier. *Travels in the Mughal Empire*. Eng Tr. by A. Constable (2nd Ed.) pp. 205, 226-27.

tions as it is evident from Aurangzeb's *farman* to Rasikdas *Kroni* that the Regulations had, by that time, become obsolete. But Aurangeb realised the importance and necessity of Todar Mal's system or Regulations. That is why he ordered to "find out the system of revenue collection in the reign of Akbar under the *diwani* administration of Todar Mal."<sup>62</sup>

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62 Jadunath Sarkar, *Mughal Administration* (4th ed.) p. 192.

RESISTANCE OF THE BENGAL-ZEMINDARS  
TO EAST INDIA COMPANY'S  
SALT MONOPOLY (1765—1836)

BALAI CHANDRA BARUI

*Introduction*

Widespread resistance to British rule by various social groups frequently occurred in India in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The *Zemindars* of the costal regions of Bengal also put up a strong, organised and systematic resistance to the East India Company's salt-monopoly, which excluded them from the production and trade of salt controlled by them since the Mughal times, and consequently threatened the various privileges, financial and social, which the *Zemindars* had been enjoying for long by virtue of their vital control over the salt production. Various other local groups connected with the industry such as the salt-producers, village-headmen and the *pykars*, who also suffered financial losses, joined hands with the *Zemindars*. The Company, on the other hand, adopted various devices towards enforcing the monopoly in salt with the collaboration of certain indigenous and European groups such as the salt farmers, merchants and salt-agents. The *Zemindars* and their local allies systematically sought to overthrow the monopoly and to make up for their financial losses in various ways. Hence the confrontation started between the Company and its allies on the one hand, and the *Zemindars* and their allies on the other.

1. *Privileges enjoyed by the Zemindars in Pre-British period and their changed position during the Company Rule*

Under the Mughals the *Zemindars* in Bengal had a vital role to play in the production and sale of salt. Though salt manufacture was actually managed by utilising the labour of the *malangi*,<sup>1</sup> "the

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1 The primary producer in salt manufacture or a person contracting to manufacture a certain quantity of salt.

local *Zemindars* were generally placed in charge of the supervision of the salt *chars*<sup>2</sup> as representatives of the Government. The supreme control was, however, vested in the hands of the *Dewan*, the financial chief of the province".<sup>3</sup> After collecting the salt the controlling *Zemindars* were authorised to sell it to the merchants who in their turn distributed it through different markets.<sup>4</sup>

Before 1757, the *Zemindars* supervised the salt production of two types of *khalaris*—those worked by *thika malangis* (who were paid on a contractual basis by the production-merchants), and the other type, where the *ajoora malangis* (who were directly controlled by the *Zemindars* and who paid their land-rents to the *Zemindars* in both salt and money) worked. The *Zemindars* had thus two sources of profit : one from the salt-*khaliari*-rents and the other from selling salt to the merchants. The merchants, who controlled the salt production of *thika khalaris*, paid *khaliari* rents to the *Zemindars*. The *ajoora malangis*, who were completely under the grip of the *Zemindars*, were persuaded or forced to take more salt lands for the purpose of delivering salt to their masters. The arrears in land-rent (in cash) payable by the *ajoora malangis* to the *Zemindars* were transformed into salt advances. The *Zemindars*' payment to the *ajoora malangis* was thus made by the 'mocoof' or remission of rent for the lands which the *malangi* held under them. Once a *malangi* had entered into *ajoora* contract there was no escape from it. In case a *malangi* absconded or died, the family had to find a substitute. The *Zemindars*, after collecting salt from the *ajoora malangis*, sold it to the salt merchants. The *Zemindars* also enjoyed a number of privileges in connection with salt. They collected duty in cash or kind on the sale of salt and levied shop-dues and market-dues on the salt-pits. They also derived an income from inland tolls at roadside *chowkies* on all merchandise, including salt.<sup>5</sup> During Mughal rule the *Zemindars* of Nizampore, Baharchar and Juldah of Chittagong,

2 A river bank exposed by submersion

3 W K Firminger, *Fifth Report on East India Affairs*, Vol. II. quoted in J K. Nag's article on "History of Bengal's Salt Industry", *Modern Review*, Sept 1939, 300.

4 J. K. Nag, *op. cit.*, 301

5 T. Raychaudhury, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, Delhi, 1969 (2nd ed.), 77-80.

enjoyed revenue from 'nimak iwaz mahal'.<sup>6</sup> The privileges varied from area to area. In Hijli, for example, the *Zemindars* used to collect *khalarī*<sup>7</sup>-rent or a cess at the rate of one rupee and eight anna a head, from all the labourers in the *khalaris* established on their estates.<sup>8</sup> Besides they had the privilege of collecting *Khorakee* or diet salt for their household consumption.<sup>9</sup>

Within a short time of the establishment of British control over Bengal the *Zemindars* lost all of these privileges. In 1765 Clive's Exclusive Society displaced them as the controlling factor in production and sale of salt. The *Zemindars* of the salt area were now compelled to sell the entire produce to the Company at a fixed rate. Despite the strong disapproval of the Court of Directors the 'Society' was able to enforce this arbitrary legislation and was successful in depriving the *Zemindars* and salt

6 A. M. Serajuddin, *The Revenue Administration of the East India Company in Chittagong 1761-1785*), Chittagong, 1971, 176. The salt-lands of the *Zemindars* were included in the revenue-paying lands. But the *Zemindars* claimed deductions of revenue from the Mughal Government due to gradual encroachment of the sea upon their revenue-paying lands and the desertion of the ryots. On the refusal of the Government to grant it, they solicited permission to make tafauls (salt-works) on such part of the lands as lay contiguous to the sea and were impregnated with salt, urging that the profits arising from them would enable them to discharge their revenue to the Government. The Government issued *sanads* to them separately, authorising them to make salt on certain specified plots of land not included in the *jama* (land-revenue) and for granting this privilege imposed a revenue on them under the head of *nimak iwaz mahal*. However, during the Company's administration from the time of Verelst to that of Wilkins, the *Zemindars* were gradually deprived of the privilege of manufacturing salt but the *jama* remained as a demand upon them. On complaint from the *Zemindars*, Verelst allowed it to remain in balance. But in the 1770-71 Wilkins again enforced the payment of the salt *jama* directing the *Zemindars* to throw the demand on the lands and collect it from the ryots. The *Zemindars* continued to demonstrate against this injustice. At last in 1788 he *nimak iwaz mahal* was finally struck off the rent-roll.

7 *Khalari* : "A place where salt is manufactured; a salt-bed or pan; a mound of earth hollowed at the top, in which straw and other materials are placed to serve as a filter for the salt water poured upon it and which when freed from dirt and sand becomes brine for boiling". Wilson's Glossary, quoted in H. R. Ghosal's *Economic Transition in the Bengal Presidency (1793-1833)* Calcutta, 1966, 96. -

8 *Parliamentary Papers*, Vo. 26. 1856, Report from the Commissioners, Appendix to Salt Report, 470

9 *Ibid*, 471.

merchants of their customary profits and in establishing its own monopoly over the salt trade of Bengal.<sup>10</sup> However, the Exclusive Society was abolished in 1768 and the salt manufacture was again, under certain restrictions, thrown open to indigenous merchants and *Zemindars* but only for a short period.<sup>11</sup> In 1772 the right of private manufacture was once again withdrawn by Warren Hastings with his introduction of the Farming system in salt under which both

10 J. K. Nag, *op. cit.*, 301. On the acquisition of the *Dewani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the East India Company in 1765, the inland trade in salt was vested in an "Exclusive Company" formed by all the officers of the Company : Civil, Military, Medical and Ecclesiastical. The profits of the monopoly after paying certain duties to the Government, were divided among the members according to the seniority of each and this was considered a compensation for the small salaries received from the treasury. The Exclusive Society established a virtual monopoly on manufacture and trade of salt. It was resolved by the Society that (i) Only this 'Exclusive Company' should purchase the salt produced in or imported into Bengal. (ii) None except this Company should produce the article. (iii) The salt should be produced by the contractors who should get advances from this Company. They, in turn, should offer advance to the *Zemindars* for manufacturing salt. (iv) The contractors, after collecting salt from the *Zemindars*, should deliver it at certain specified places, at a stipulated rate per hundred maunds (v) The Society, after purchasing salt from the contractors, should transport it to certain places for sale. The country merchants might then become the purchasers and transport the salt wherever they pleased. Thus the prevailing system of production and sale of salt was thoroughly changed. The indigenous production-merchants were replaced by a new group of contractors. The *Zemindars* lost control over the salt production, They were placed under the contractors.

11 Rickards, *India or Facts etc.*, 638, quoted in H. R. Ghosal, *op. cit.*, 96. In October, 1768, the President and Council resolved that every *Zemindar* or landholder whose *chars* or *khalaris* were granted to him by *sanad*; and also, all farmers on lease, should continue to enjoy the benefit of working them. But they should be restricted by bond and penalty, not to dispose of a larger quantity than 50,000 maunds to any one purchaser—a measure preventive of monopoly. That an entire freedom would be granted to all other merchants, natives of the country, for renting and working all other *khalaris* whatever, of the Muslims or Hindus, provided no one person directly or indirectly would make a larger quantity than 50,000 maunds. That the engagement between a merchant and a *malangi* would last for one year only and the *Zemindar* of each district would be directed to lend every assistance to secure to such merchants the attentive service of such *malangis* and again to see that the merchant would strictly conform to his engagements with the *malangis*. Therefore, the Company tried to return to the previous system of production with certain limitations. Again, the *Zemindars* were given the right of supervision over salt production. The production-merchants were almost restored to their former position.

the manufacture and trade in salt were controlled for the benefit of the Government revenue.<sup>12</sup> The *khalaris* were now let in farm to individuals for a period of five years on condition that they should deliver the whole of the article produced at a stipulated price to the Government and the latter was to supply it to the indigenous salt dealers. The merchants were called upon to make a forward contract with the Government from year to year for certain quantities of salt deliverable at certain manufacturing places and to advance three-fourths of the cost. The farmers also undertook, on receiving the advance, to supply, on account of Government, the quantity of salt annually specified, on condition of paying a penalty at the rate of fifty rupees per hundred maunds for supplying less and receiving a premium at the rate of twenty five rupees per hundred maunds for supplying more. Government issued orders to the farmers to deliver the contracted quantity to the merchants on the latter's paying off the balance of the cost plus the duty upon it.<sup>13</sup> The farmers were not permitted to sell any salt directly. Thus the Company virtually established their monopoly in production and sale of salt.

With the introduction of the Farming system in salt the *Zemindars* lost their traditional position relating to salt manufacture and trade. In consideration of their giving up the privilege of the free manufacture of salt, they were allowed either *khaliari-rent* deductions from their annual *jama* (total revenue) or given a monthly allowance known as *moshahira*.<sup>14</sup> But this was too meagre an amount to compensate for their financial loss. What was more important the *Zemindars* lost social prestige. Their control over the peasants was weakened particularly at a time when the new 'Calcutta Farmers' entered their estates to offer advances to the *malangis* who were actually peasants directly under the *Zemindars*.<sup>15</sup> Besides when the salt lands were taken over

12 Rickards, *op. cit.*, 639-40 and Firminger's *Fifth Report*, 38 quoted in Ghosal, *op. cit.*, 96.

13 B. B Das Gupta, "Picture of the Salt Industry in Bengal During the days of the prosperity in the 19th century", *The Calcutta Review*, Vol 40, 1931 (July-Sept), 16.

14 Letter from Auckland to Court, August 10, 1836 (Bengal Separate Proceedings) quoted in Ghosal, *op. cit.*, 97

15 The *malangis* were also peasants. The manufacturing season of salt started in October or November and went on right upto June, weather permitting. The peasants after harvesting their paddy in November or December engaged themselves in salt manufacture, and the break of monsoon closed the manufacture only to divert them back to agriculture. B. B Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, 27.

no compensation was allowed to the *Zemindars* of Hijli for salt *jama*. Thus were they deprived of the profit which they derived from the management of those estates.<sup>16</sup> Along with the *Zemindars*, the old indigenous merchants also lost their age-old privileges relating to the production and sale of salt.

### 1. *Reaction and resistance of the Zemindars*

The *Zemindars* reacted in two ways. First, they tried to compensate for their financial loss by whatever means they could think of—legal or illegal. Secondly, they tried to obstruct the manufacture and transportation of salt with the object of harrassing and discrediting the farmers by making them defaulters. The old indigenous merchants also collaborated with the *Zemindars* in this matter.

The resistance of the *Zemindars* to the Company's salt-policy was perceptible throughout Bengal particularly in Jessore, Nadia, 24-Parganas, Dacca, Midnapore and Hijli. The resistance took a serious turn in Jessore. The Jessore Salt Division contained a number of farms: Roymongal, Sibpore, Poylahatty, Balinda, Balea and Agarpara. Of all these the Balinda farm was especially difficult to manage because the local private merchants were strongly opposed to the farmers. The *Zemindars* of these areas constantly obstructed the salt manufacture. The *malangis*, *taffalies* and *moindars* (salt-boilers) were totally under their control. It was sometimes impossible for the farmer's *gomastas* to make advances to the *malangis* due to this opposition. The *malangis*, under the influence of *Zemindars*, openly neglected the boiling of salt. Even after receiving the full advances for the whole season, they delayed repairing of the *khalaris* and returned home before the end of the boiling season.<sup>17</sup> If the *gomastas* had tried to send them back to the *khalaris* they had to face strong opposition of the *Zemindars*. The *Zemindars* also encouraged the *malangis*, *taffalies* and *moindars*, not to pay a single *cowry* to the farmers, although according to the custom of the land if the salt-worker failed to report to the *khalaris* in time and returned home before the expiry of the season they had to pay the balance with premium which might appear to be justly due from them.

16 Report from the Commissioners, *op. cit.*, 469

17 Calcutta Committee of Revenue (hereafter C.C.R.) 1776. (May-June Vol.) LR No. 180; June 6, 1776.

To frustrate the opposition of the *Zemindars*, the farmers adopted a new method of making contracts with the *malangis*. They began to make such contracts in the presence of the *Negaban* of the Government on condition that they would work in *khalaris* from January to May i.e. for five months.<sup>18</sup> But it did not produce any good result. At the instigation of the *Zemindars* the *malangis* broke their contracts unhesitatingly and returned home after working only for one, two or three months. Besides the *Zemindars* assisted and protected the *malangis* in selling their salt to the smugglers instead of handing it over to the farmers. The farmers of Jessore failed to get delivery of about 40,000 maunds of salt produced in the parganas of Talla, Khazra, Bhaulka, Bhandarpole, Zamrea and Balandia under the *Zemindari* of Raja Krishna Chandra and Ram Govinda Roy.<sup>19</sup> As the farmers of Jessore paid a lower price than what the Dacca farmers offered, the *malangis* of the former regions sold their salt to the smugglers for getting higher price and the *Zemindar* assisted them in all possible manner.

The private merchants of Balandia also offered great resistance to the salt farmers by obstructing the production and transportation of salt. The resistance took a serious turn when in an open defiance of the Government order Madhabram Bhattacharya, Ramjoy Kur, Deantoolah Pursulah and other merchants drove away the farmer's people and forcibly took away all the salt produced in the area.<sup>20</sup> They even went to the length of announcing by a beat or drum that the farmer Rasik Lal Dutta and others had nothing to do there and that any salt-maker who would do business with them would be punished.<sup>21</sup> Matters became worse when the farmer's people seized and carried away Madhabram Bhattacharya to Atghara, a village where the farmers' *cachary* was located and demanded from him the salt which he had earlier taken away. On receiving the news of the abduction of Madhabram, his partners, Dayaram Majumdar, Jagneswar Mondal, Deantoolah Pursulah and others sent a large number of people with *baugsaries*, *peons*, *pikes*, *malangis* and others who having

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18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

beaten up the farmer's people rescued Madhabram from the *cachary*, robbed the treasury, plundered the ryots of Atghara and burnt their houses.<sup>22</sup> The farmers reported the incident to the Board of Revenue and sought redress. The Board issued an order to bring those turbulent *Zemindars* and merchants to the Khalsa with the help of the *baugssaries*. But they disobeyed the order by compelling the *gomastas* to return to Calcutta and sold the newly boiled salt on their own account.

The Khalsa again ordered the farmers to boil salt at Baland. Accordingly, they sent their *gomastas*, *mohurirs* and *peons*. But when they began to distribute advances, Rambhadra Biswas, Ramjoy Kur, Pursodah and other *Zemindars* sent a large number of people and *peons* who robbed the treasury, ill-treated and finally drove out the *gomastas* from the place. The Khalsa took up the matter seriously and sent an *Amin*, five *sepoy*s and two *peons* with the *gomastas*. But when the advances were offered the *Zemindar*'s people intervened and prevented the *malangis* from meeting the *gomastas* and sold the new salt on their own account. A great commotion began when the *sepoy*s seized a quantity of new salt and proceeded to sell it in the *bazar*. The *Zemindars*' *peons* and *pikes* attacked and wounded the *sepoy*s and forced them and the *Amin* to return to Calcutta.<sup>23</sup> Repeated resistance by the *Zemindars* and the merchants upset the farmers who now planned to seize as much salt as possible which still remained in Baland. Accordingly, the Calcutta Committee of Revenue granted a *parwana* to Balaram, *Naib* of Jessore, to depute an *Amin* and four *harcaras* to seize 50,000 maunds of the new salt still remaining in the *golas* of a *ganj* (market) at Chandrea in Baland. However, the *Daroga* of the *ganj* stopped the *Amin* and his men and sold the salt wherever he pleased.

In these intermittent clashes between the farmers and the *Zemindars* for two years the former suffered a loss of Sicca Rupees 4770 in addition to the forfeiture of a huge amount of salt. The details of the loss are as follows:<sup>24</sup>

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22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

	Sa. Rs.
1. Treasury robbed by the people (ready money)	806
2. Amount advanced to the <i>malangis</i>	362
3. Wages and Diet for the <i>Amin</i> , <i>Sepoys</i> and <i>Peons</i> deputed from the Government	843
4. Wages of the <i>Gomastas</i> , <i>Gerdwar</i> and <i>Peons</i> and others belonging to the farmers	2450
5. Office charges and etc.	209
6. Paid to the <i>Ryots</i> whose houses were burnt	100

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Total Sicca Rs. 4770

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In many areas of Jessore the *Zemindars* and *Talookdars* combined to resist the farmers. Sambhu Chandra Roy, *Zemindar* of Mouzabari and Krishna Chandra Roy and Jagannath Roy, *Zemindars* of Jangalgachi forced the *taffalies* to flee their houses leaving even their wives and children behind when Golam Inder Sing, the salt farmer, went to make advances to them.<sup>25</sup> The Government ordered the *Naib* of Jessore to assist the farmer.

Sibram Bose and Nilkanta Jagrick, *Zemindars* of Isufpore, harrassed the farmer through a clever device. When the farmer's *gomastas* were trying to send the *malangis* to the *khalaris*, the *Zemindars* gathered in a *Cachary* at Choopnagore, summoned the head-*malangis* and confined them on pretence of old debts.<sup>26</sup> In this way the *Zemindars* tried to delay the movement of the under-*malangis*, *moirdars* and *taffalies* to the *khalaris*. As the head-*malangis* were confined in the *Cachary*, the *gomastas* could not bring them to the *khalaris* or to supply them necessary provisions and stores for boiling. In the absence of the head-*malangis*, the under-*malangis* left their work. Consequently in many cases boiling was completely stopped for more than two months. In Balandi, the *Zemindars* often confined the head-*malangis* just after the commencement of the boiling. When the news of such confinement reached the *khalaris*, the under-*malangis* sold off whatever salt they had produced to the smugglers and returned home.

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25 C.C.R 1776, Vol. 9 (Part I) Jan. 29, 1776.

26 C.C.R Progs Aug 26, 1776

In reply to the petition of the farmers mentioning the incidents, the Calcutta Committee of Revenue issued a *parwana* to Balaram, *Naib* of Jessor, to release the *malangis* from the confinement of the *Zemindars* of Isufpore. Though for the time being the *Zemindars* were forced to release the *malangis*, they continued to harass the farmers by obstructing salt-production. Instead of sending the *malangis* to the *khalaris*, the *Zemindars* instigated them to go to Calcutta to complain against the farmers.<sup>27</sup> The result was that the boiling of salt was seriously hampered and half of the total advances made to the *malangis* remained unrecovered.

The merchants of Bhusna headed by Seromory Shaw obstructed salt-production by prosecuting the head-*malangis* and confining them in the jail at Calcutta for their old debts and balances, though according to the farmer's lease of *Pattah* no one should molest the *malangis* for former balances on any account whatever.<sup>28</sup> The result was that the production was greatly affected as other *malangis* went into hiding to avoid imprisonment in Calcutta. Besides, despite repeated petitions of the farmers the silence of the Government over the release of the *malangis* encouraged the merchants of other areas and several warrants were issued against many head-*malangis*. Further, as many warrants from the Court of Judicature with *peons* were sent to the mofussil, great disturbances occurred there and most of the *malangis* ran away after receiving advances for fear of being seized. Some *malangis* hide themselves after taking advances and some others never turned up at the *Cachary* to receive advances. Since the issuing of warrants against the head-*malangis* and their confinement in the jail took place at the beginning of the season, 197 *khalaris* remained vacant, involving a loss of 40,000 maund of salt to the farmers. The running away of the *malangis* leaving their work meant an additional strain on the farmers' resources. They were compelled to provide the *khalaris* with rice, pots, and sundry other necessary stores at their own cost because the supply of these articles was the responsibility of the *malangis* for which they had already been paid by the farmers.<sup>29</sup> As many of the head-*malangis* were absent from the *khalaris*, people under them also ran away, some at the end of one month, others after two and three months' work and none continued for four months though they had agreed

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 Sometimes the farmers were compelled to send about 10,000 mounds of rice and 1,50,000 pots for boiling the salt.

to work for five months. The ultimate result was that barely half of the estimated quantity of salt could be produced.

The *Zemindars* of other districts did not lag behind. The *Naib* of Setpore, Saffoo, Baturgea, belonging to the *Zemindari* of Raja Krishna Chandra of Nadia, sent *barkandaj*, *harkaras* and *peons*, who seized the salt, the *gomastas* and the men who were carrying it to the Company's *gola*.<sup>30</sup> Debaprasad Roy of Hatoghata, under-farmer of Raja Krishna Chandra, confined the *malangis* of Pathankhali who were carrying rice and provisions to the *khalaris*.<sup>31</sup> The production of salt came to a stop. The farmers appealed to the Calcutta Committee of Revenue to seize the salt. This could not be done as the peons who were sent were severely beaten and the *Zemindar's* people carried away the salt. The farmers also failed to get possession of 25,000 maunds of salt produced at the 'country *khalaris*' in the parganas of Khazra, Tala, Bhalka, Bhanderpole, Zamrea under the *Zemindari* of Krishna Chandra and Ram Govinda as the *malangis* sold the salt in the market on their own. The *Zemindars* of Krishnagar levied duties on salt-boats of the traders violating the regulations of the Government.<sup>32</sup> Joynarayan Choudhury, *Zemindar* of Selimabad in the Dacca district, encouraged and protected the bandits who looted the salt-boats of the merchants.<sup>33</sup>

The *Zemindars* of Krishnagar, Cherulea, Modoodea, Hogla and Moyhaty in their own made the work of the farmers difficult. The *gomastas* could not trace the *malangis*, *taffalies* and *moindars* even after the expiration of one month of the boiling season. The *Zemindars* instigated the *moindars* to demand higher prices of eight rupees against the usual rate of rupees six.<sup>34</sup> The farmers sometimes had to raise the price to get the *moindars* to work for them. But in the following year, when the farmers wanted to return to the usual rate, the *moindars*, strongly backed by the *Zemindars*, opposed it and demanded the enhanced price of the previous year. It was also due to the trickery of the *Zemindars* of Bhandarpole, Talacudgra, Zamrea, Bhulea that the *Amin* remained ignorant of the actual number

30 C.C.R. Prog. Aug 26, 1776.

31 *Ibid.*

32 Proceedings of the Revenue Board consisting of the whole Council (hereafter P.R.B.C.), Prog. No. 8; Nov 19, 1773.

33 P.R.B.C. LR No. 86, Feb 9, 1773.

34 C.C.R. Progs. Feb 6, 1777.

of *khalaris*. Besides, the *gomastas* of the *Zemindars* prevented the *malangis* from going to take advances; nor did they permit the *Mustager's* people to work in the *khalaris*.<sup>35</sup>

Birnarayan, *Zemindar* of Hijli (Jalamoota) was able to prevent Panchananda Dutt, the salt farmer, from bringing salt to the river-ghat for transportation. The *Zemindar's* people drove away the weighmen, boatmen and other person in the management.<sup>36</sup> The farmer was badly hit. He lost about 75,000 maunds of salt.<sup>37</sup> Besides he failed to supply the *Beoparies*<sup>38</sup> with the full amount of salt he was contract-bound to deliver. The *Beoparies* suffered loss from a fall in the price of salt because of the delay in collection due to opposition of the *Zemindars*. The Calcutta Committee strictly ordered the *Naib Rupram* to prevent any obstruction from the *Zemindars* and give every reasonable and proper assistance to Panchananda Dutta.

The *Zemindars* of Hijli further harassed the farmers by stopping the supply of straw and bamboos, essential for repairing the *candies*. They obstructed and delayed the weighing of salt as a result of which much salt was lost through the severe North-Westers.<sup>39</sup> The Salt Agent of Hijli repeatedly complained to the Committee that the *Zemindars* were reluctant to co-operate by providing him with boats and bullocks for transportation of salt.<sup>40</sup>

Ram Govind Roy, *Zemindar* of Taki, adopted a new device to harrass the farmers. The *malangis* of Balea and Agarpura boiled 4,000 mounds of salt; but when the farmer's *gomastas* went to collect the salt, Ram Govind circulated an order of the Calcutta Committee of Revenue that the production of salt, betelnut and tobacco could no longer remain in the hands of the farmers from the next year. When this was known, the *malangis* under the *Zemindari* of Taki broke off the *chop* (symbol) of the farmer on

35 C.C.R. Progs. Jan 27, 1777.

36 C.C.R. Progs. Dec 7, 1778.

37 *Ibid.*

38 A travelling dealer or a small trader—*Midnapore Salt Papers : Hijli and Tamluk (1781-1807)* edited by N. K. Sinha, A. K. Das Gupta and T. K. Mukherjee, Calcutta, 1954, 219.

39 C.C.R. Progs. LR No 144; April 14, 1777.

40 C.C.R. Progs. LR No. 257; June 16, 1777.

the salt-packets and sold it to the *Zemindar* at the market price.<sup>41</sup> The *malangis* of other places soon followed the same example causing great financial loss to the farmer.

### 3. *Counter-resistance of the Farmers and its failure*

The salt-farmers, in their turn, offered counter-resistance to the *Zemindars* but failed miserably. To keep the *malangis* at work and stop them from moving away, the farmers kept their *gomastas* and the Company's *Amin* posted at the *khalaris* till the end of the season. Another objective was to check smuggling. For this purpose additional quantities of rice, pots and provisions etc. had to be sent to the *khalaris*.<sup>42</sup> But the whole plan failed because the head-*malangis* were kept from going to the *khalaris* by the *Zemindars*. In the absence of the head-*malangis*, the *taffalies* and *moindars* ran away before the end of the season. The farmers' attempt to prevent smuggling also failed. A large number of people, employed in the *khalaris*, could smuggle a large quantity of salt and carried part of it to the neighbouring areas. When the farmers tried to seize the illicit salt, the *Naibs* foiled these attempts.<sup>43</sup> It seems that the *Zemindars* and *Naibs* had secret understanding in regard to the illicit salt.

The farmers offered some additional advance money to each *malangi* in an effort to induce them to work at *khalaris* till the end of *Jaistha* (May-June) and thereby produce a larger quantity of salt to enable them to make up for the deficiency. Accordingly, in the year 1776 the farmers of Jessore made advances to the *malangis* for 1,355 *khalaris* who agreed to deliver 3,47,478 maunds of salt. The *malangis* received the advances in full but owing to the absence of the head-*malangis*, could only prepared 939 *khalaris*.<sup>44</sup> The *Zemindars* kept the head-*malangis* away from the *khalaris* from the middle of *Baisack* to *Jaistha* (April-May) and the *malangis*, *taffalies* and *moindars* left work as usual. The farmers tried in vain to stop smuggling as the *malangis* had already concealed the salt.

Thus due to the connivance of the *Naib* and the *Zemindars* the Committee's orders could not be carried out. The result was the

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41 C.C.R. Progs. Aug 26, 1776.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*

farmers lost heavily, the deficiency of the previous years could not be made up and indeed the production further declined.

#### 4. *Nature of resistance of the Zemindars*

It is worth noting that the *Zemindars* of eastern Bengal put up stiffer resistance than their counterparts elsewhere. This was probably because the *Zemindars* generally played the role of salt farmers in Midnapore and Burdwan. A notable feature of this resistance-movement was that once a device evolved by one *Zemindar* succeeded, others quickly adopted it. For instance, the novel device of the *Zemindar* of Jessore (4 annas Division) for driving out the farmers' people was followed by Syedpore—*Zemindar*. In 1976, the *Dewan* of the *Zemindar* of Jessore issued orders forbidding any production of salt in his estates on behalf of the Company. The *taffalies* and *moindars*, according to this order, were not to be allowed to go to the *khalaris*.<sup>45</sup> For a proper execution of the order, he stationed *negabans*, *peons* and *harcaras* in every village. The *Zemindar* was presumably prepared for a direct clash. When the Government's people tried to bring the salt producers to work by force, the *Zemindar*'s men attacked and hit them with large sticks. Many of them fled, some were wounded and captured by the *Zemindar*'s people. Following this example, the *Zemindar* of Syedpore instructed his farmers and *karmacharies* (employees) to prevent the farmers' *gomastas* from making advances to the *malangis* and forcibly taking them to the *khalaris* and, if possible, to drive them away from his *Zeminduri*.<sup>46</sup> Srikanta Roy, *Zemindar* of Isufpore, also adopted the same device. He too confined the *malangis* in his *cachary* and released them only after the proper season for boiling salt was over.

Suryanarayan Bhattacharya, *Sikdar* of Cherulia and Mudodia also followed such a method. On various trivial pretences he stopped and detained boats carrying rice, pots and other necessaries to the *khalaris* for the salt producers.<sup>47</sup> He also seized and confined the *malangis* by carrying them away from the boats and also collected heavy tolls.

45 C.C.R. Prog. Oct. 3, 1976.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

While the *Zemindars* of Syedpore and Isufpore largely adopted the policy of indirect resistance, Raja Kissen Chund Roy and Govind Chund Roy, *Zemindars* of Nadia and Moyhati, preferred a direct confrontation. They forcibly prevented the farmers from getting possession of the salt-works in the parganas of Balea, Agarpura, Tala, Kaja, Bhalka, Bhandarpole, Zamrea and other areas.<sup>48</sup> The farmers' people could not reach those parganas at all. In other areas, where the salt was boiled, these were seized by the *Zemindar's* people and had never been restored to the farmers. They also prevented the *taffalies* and *moindars* from repairing the *khalaris*. The *Talookdars* of Hogla also directly resisted the farmers by beating and driving away their people deputed to recover the smuggled salt.

A remarkable characteristic of the resistance-fovement was that the *Zemindars* often received administrative backing. Balaram, the *Naib* of Jessore, assisted the *Zemindar* of Syedpore against the salt-farmers in all possible ways. By utilising his administrative position, the *Naib* indirectly helped the *Zemindar*. He detained the head-*malangis* and under-*malangis* in his *cachary* as long as possible at the peak of the boiling seasons. The *Naib*, sometimes with a clear motive, ordered the farmer's *gomastas* to send the *Muhurries* with necessary papers and accounts along with the *malangis* in his *cachary* at Choopnagore.<sup>49</sup> The *gomastas* carried out the first part of the order by sending *Muhurries* but disobeyed the second part as the presence of the *malangis* was absolutely necessary at the time of boiling. Balaram's people, then, forcibly brought the *malangis* to the *cachary* where they were detained. Sometimes the *Naib* fomented dissensions among the *malangis* in order to impede salt production. After detaining them for some time in his *cachary* the *Naib* falsely spread the news that the farmers' men were creating trouble in their homes. The *malangis*, who were naturally greatly upset, rushed back to their homes in a body thereby totally dislocating the manufacture of salt. Further, the *Naib* often made smuggling easier by occasionally withdrawing his *peons* and *negabans* after the expiry of the boiling season. Besides he often sent his own men to the *mofussil* to assist the *Zemindar* in preventing the *taffalies* and *moindars* from going to the *khalaris*. He deliberately ignored the complains of the farmers about such activities, until the Committee of Revenue inter-

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48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

vened. The *Naib* tried to carry out the Committee's order with much reluctance, making as much delay as possible with the ultimate object of ruining the farmers' business.

##### 5. *Changing character of Resistance of the Zemindars*

With the termination of the Five Years' Farming System in 1777, the resistance of the *Zemindars* assumed a new dimension.<sup>50</sup> The *Zemindars*, infact, entered into direct confrontation with the Government itself. There were various points of conflict between the *Zemindars* on the one hand and the Government and the farmers on the other. There were armed clashes in the 24-Parganas in which Santosh Roy and other *Zemindars* sided with Gorachand Basak and Ramlochan Palit, their under-farmers, in their conflict with Jagamohon Sen, the *khās* farmer<sup>51</sup> of salt. Here the clash was mainly between the under-farmers and the *khās* farmer in which the *Zemindars* came out in support of their under-farmers which ultimately went against the Government.

The affected areas were Hatiagar, Coolberia, Shawpore, Choremahal. The root of the conflict was an order issued by the Governor-General-in-Council on July 29, 1777 saying that "the services of the *malangis* shall be left to their own option".<sup>52</sup> Besides, they were given the liberty to work in any district as they please. This order was contrary to the custom of the land that "the *Zemindars* had the right to advance a *malangi* who worked for him last year".<sup>53</sup> The Government actually intended to give some liberties to the *malangis*; but *Jagamohon*, the farmer of the *khās* areas, took advantage of the order and made advances to the *malangis* of the *Zemindari* of

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50 The Five Years' Farming system proved a failure and so it was abolished in 1777. In that year the Company adopted an annual farming system. The *Zemindars* were again called upon to be the salt-farmers. The Provincial Councils were directed to let out the salt *mahals* on the most advantageous terms for a ready money rent, including duties. The farmers were left free to dispose of their salt in their own way. No advances were made to them on account of the Government. Thus both manufacture and sale of salt were leased out to the *Zemindars* or farmers. The *Zemindars*, however, were not restored to their former position.

51 Farmer of the Government lands.

52 C.C.R. Progs. Oct 3, 1776.

53 *Ibid.*

Santosh Roy—a move which was resisted by Gorachand Basak and Ramlochon Palit, the under-farmers of the *Zemindar*. On the basis of the Government Order of July 29, 1777, Jagamohan argued that *malangis* could not be bound by the custom of the *barboony khalaris* (*khalaris* in the forests) to work every year at the same *Godars*<sup>54</sup> and might make salt wherever they please, and that he had therefore the right to make advances to the willing *malangis*. Jagamohan further argued that though he had to pay higher *khalaris*-rents than those paid by Palit and Basak, the number of *khalaris* allotted to him was far less than what was given to the farmers of the *Zemindari* areas. The rent of the *barboony khalaris* of the 24-Parganas was settled by the Committee at Rs. 36,000 and was divided as follows : 22,000 rupees for the *khas mahals* and 14,000 rupees for the *Zemindari* division. Accordingly, the number of *khalaris* for *khas* was  $733\frac{1}{3}$  and for the *Zemindari* it was  $466\frac{2}{3}$ . But Jagamohan was given only 200 *khalaris* out of  $733\frac{1}{3}$ .<sup>55</sup> Jagamohan therefore, tried to make advances to the *malangis* of the *Zemindari* area to compensate for the small number of *khalaris* assigned to him. The *Zemindars*, on the other hand, asserted that the *malangis* were particularly dependent on the *Zemindar* customarily working at their *khalaris* and nowhere else.<sup>56</sup> Under such circumstances when Jagamohan tried to engage the *malangis* of the *Zemindari* areas, Basak and Palit opposed him. The *Zemindars* reacted sharply when Jagamohan sent people to get hold of the *malangis* from their areas to boil salt in his *khas* areas. They took several measures, direct and indirect, to prevent Jagamohan from carrying out his plans.

In Coolberia and Hatiagar, the *Zemindar*'s people sunk the boats of Jagamohan while carrying *malangis* by the canal of 'Catakhali' and entirely blockaded the passage of the canal.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the preliminary work of the cutting of the wood and the heaping up of the earth, essential for making salt, was entirely stopped.<sup>58</sup> Thus

54 The place from which the salt was produced

55 C.C.R. Progs. Oct 3, 1776.

56 C.C.R. Progs. Dec 2, 1778.

57 C.C.R. Progs. Oct 3, 1776.

58 As the cutting of the wood constituted half of the business of boiling salt, Basak and Palit sent a large number of armed people, with the help of the *Zemindars*, to prevent the *malangis* from going to the jungles by obstructing the canals.

by obstructing travel by the canal the *Zemindars* could completely paralyse the salt production as it was commonly known that if the *malangis* failed to turn up at the *khalaris* at the beginning of the proper season, the whole of the advances made to them would be lost as no salt could be produced.

The *Zemindars* also offered armed resistance to Jagamohon. Though the salt *mahals* of Dariabad were farmed out to Jagamchon, the *Tolookdars* of the area with a number of people armed with sticks and other instruments, prevented the *malangis* from coming to his *gomostas* to receive advances. In fact, the *Talookdars* themselves made advances to the *malangis* probably with the intention of delivering salt to the smugglers. Basak and Palit often went to the mofussil riding elephants and accompanied by *sepoy*s and forced those *malangis* who had already accepted advances from Jagamohon to take it again from them.

In fact, with the active support of the *Zemindars* it was possible for the agents of Basak and Palit, posted in Coolberia, Hatiagar and Shawpore, to keep the areas under their control. They employed armed men at the different salt 'mokams' whose duties were not only to seize and carry off the *malangis* by force and keep them under confinement, but also to compel them by violent means to take advances though they had already received same from Jagamohon. Ninety *malangis* were seized in this manner. The resistance of the *Zemindars* took a serious turn in Coolberia where Harananda Sarkhel seized and severely beat Jagamohan's people and plundered and broke down their houses and carried off whatever materials they had collected for making salt. As a result, the *gomostas* of Jagamohon had to leave the place.

Jagamohon, in his turn, retaliated but was mostly by indirect methods. There were of course a few direct clashes. Jagamohon generally appealed to the Government for assistance against the *Zemindars*. He presumably tried to avoid direct confrontation with the *Zemindar* and looked to the Government for redress of his grievances. To pacify the *Zemindars*, he often wrote to the Government that his grievance was not against the *Zemindars* but against their under-farmers. This was, however, immaterial because the *Zemindars* always supported their under-farmers in their conflict with Jagamohan.

To keep the *malangis* under control Jagamohan then tried a new method. He began to pay the *malangis* higher prices than those offered

by Basak and Palit and at the same time managed to have a Government order issued in such a form that the *malangis* who were willing to break former agreements to work for a higher offer would not be at liberty to do it again for a second larger offer. Jagamohon thus tried to utilise a Government order to bring the *malangis* under his grip permanently. Perhaps he assumed that the poor peasants would not dare to switch their allegiance to Basak and Palit by violating the laws. This increasing dependence on the legal procedure was a clear indication of the weaker position of Jagamohon in relation to his opponents.

#### 6. *The situation after 1780 : Resistance to the Monopoly System*

The opposition of the *Zemindar* persisted even after the introduction of the Agency System in 1780.<sup>59</sup> Even under the new circumstances, the *Zemindars* continued to be hostile to the monopoly

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59 Under the new system the salt producing tracts were divided into six agencies—Hijli, Tamlook, 24-Parganas, Roymangal, Bhulua and Chittagong. Over such agency was placed a Civil Officer of rank called the Salt Agent. At the beginning of the manufacturing season, the *malangi*s received advances from the Agent, stipulating to deliver to him on account of Government the whole amount produced, at an agreed price. The Agent stored the salt in *golas* and sold it to wholesale dealers without limit of quantity at a price fixed by the Government from year to year. A merchant willing to purchase salt had to deposit the price of the quantity he proposed to take, in the office of the Board of Revenue at Calcutta. The Board then issued orders to the Agent to deliver the quantity to him. The *malangi*'s responsibility ceased after he had delivered the salt to the *Daroga* after having the salt weighed at the *khalaris* by an weightment establishment kept by the Agent. There were boat-contractors who took advances from the Agent for carrying the salt from the *khalaris* to the local *gola* in charge of an Intendant. The *Daroga*'s responsibility ceased after he had delivered the salt to the Intendant after weighing it at the *gola*. A preventive establishment was maintained which watched the salt through all process of manufacture, weighing, and transport, for the prevention of smuggling, or illicit trade. The difference between the cost price of salt and the price at which it was sold to the wholesale dealers constituted the duty on it. Thus an extensive monopoly of the manufacture and sale of salt was set up under the control of the Government. The *Zemindars* and native production-merchants were totally excluded from the salt-management. The new system was fully successful. The revenue at once took a big jump. But in the few succeeding years it declined again and Lord Cornwallis introduced the system of quarterly auction sale of limited quantities of salt at Calcutta Sale at a fixed price without limit of quantity was abolished. The new system had an immediate effect upon the revenue which rose to a fabulous amount.

system and sought to paralyse the manufacture of salt and to undermine the position of the merchants who sold it. They obstructed the salt manufacture in various ways and encouraged illicit production and sale of salt at low prices in their respective areas with the ultimate aim of reducing the sale and also the profits of the merchants.

In Dec. 1784 the Salt Agent of Hijli complained to the Collector of Midnapore that his men could not collect the *malangis* owing to the opposition of the *Zemindars* and *Tahsildars*.<sup>60</sup> Bhim Nandi and Paramananda Poharanjee, *Zemindars* of Chakla Midnapore obstructed the salt manufacture of the Government by dissuading the *malangis* from enrolling themselves and receiving advances.<sup>61</sup> It was further complained that the *Talookdars* of Moina and Sabang had denied the *malangis* the right to use the *coota* or stubble (used as fuel for boiling salt)—a right which they had customarily enjoyed.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the *Talookdars* of Cosijora opposed the Company's claim over the

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But the system of quarterly sales of limited quantities of salt by auction had a very injurious effect on the consumers. Naturally under a system of auction sale, the retail price of salt was subject to violent fluctuations and sub-monopolies were formed under the bigger Government-monopoly which extracted the highest possible price from the consumers. Reaction to this situation was smuggling of salt. By encouraging the smuggling the *Zemindars* tried to compensate for their financial losses. The *malangis* took part in it to make up for the low price offered by the Agent. The consumers supported it as they got illicit salt at a much lower price than the market rate. The salt business ran into great difficulties in 1830's. Due to increase of smuggling, most of the warehouses were overstocked with the salt of previous years and the Government was compelled to offer bounties for their clearance. The salt merchants of Calcutta stated in a petition that the glut in the salt market was due to an excessive increase of smuggling. To solve the problem, the Government, acting on the recommendation of the Select Committee on Salt, abolished in 1835 the system of periodical auction sales and introduced the system of *gola* or open warehouse sales at fixed prices. Private individuals got the chance of participating in salt trade both by importation and manufacture under a combined system a customs and excise. The new system also encouraged the import of foreign salt into Bengal and it really happened after 1836. The British free traders broke the Company's salt monopoly in Bengal. The impact of the changes of 1836 fell heavily upon the big salt merchants of Bengal. Periodic auction sale gave them an opportunity of forming sub-monopolies. Now with the abolition of this system they became disheartened and were gradually ousted from the salt market.

60 Sinha, *Midnapore Salt Papers*, Hijli letters Issued (Dec. 14, 1784), 52.

61 *Ibid.* (Dec. 13 1801), 130.

62 *Ibid.* (Jan. 18, 1803), 134.

*malangis* of their areas by giving them protection against the calls of the Salt *Darogas* for receiving advances<sup>63</sup>

By obstructing the manufacture of salt they did create some difficulties for the Government. But the Government could still collect heavy penalty from the farmers for deficit in supply. By encouraging and protecting the illicit manufacture and sale of salt in their areas, the *Zemindars* seriously put the Government in trouble and robbed the merchants of their profits. The Company-records are full of references to illicit manufacture and smuggling of salt. Moina and Sabang in Midnapure were the principal stations for inland smuggling<sup>64</sup> Mr. Baker, Superintendent, wrote to the Magistrate of Midnapore regarding Sabang that "from what I have myself seen I am convinced that the majority of the houses in several villages in this neighbourhood contain illicit *khalaris*".<sup>65</sup> Pataspore, Sibpore, Bircool and Kaliapore were also important centres of smuggling. Inland smuggling was also paralleled by extensive border smuggling. Before the British annexation of Orissa in 1803, Maratha salt<sup>66</sup> from the Maratha enclosures and Orissa salt from Balasore were regularly smuggled into the British territory of Midnapore. *Ganjes* (trading marts) were established for this purpose in small jungle districts dependent on Chotonagpur in which the Company's authority was not firmly established. The *Zemindars* of Chotonagpur encouraged this supply. Why did the smuggling occur? It was the combined response of the *malangis*, *Zemindars*, consumers and the indigenous *pykars*<sup>67</sup> and merchants to salt monopoly.<sup>68</sup>

63 *Ibid.* (Jan. 1, 1803), 133.

64 Sinha. *op. cit.* 23.

65 Board of Revenue (Salt) (hereafter BR) Vol. 545, 1854 Prog. No. 22. April 19, Feb 17, 1854

66 The Maratha districts east of the Subarnarekha i.e., Bogra, Camarda, Pataspore and others produced a considerable quantity of salt which was known as Maratha salt

67 The wholesalers.

68 The *malangis* were induced to conceal illicit salt and hand it over to the smugglers to compensate for poor price offered to them. The *Zemindars* supported and protected illicit manufacture and trade of salt to make up for their loss of revenue. The *pykars* did not want to leave their traditional business. The consumers were always eager to get salt at the cheapest rate which the illicit salt provided for. The native *chowkey* servants instead of checking this smuggling assisted and promoted of the Company's lack of liberal policy in the payment of salaries to them.

The *Zemindars* were extremely severe on the informers who supplied information regarding the illicit manufacture and sale of salt to the Government officials. Actually, the control of the *Zemindars* on their subjects was so strong that it was practically impossible for the Preventive Department to secure informers "Even when the informers reported anything, they were tortured, oppressed and destroyed to create such a panic that no one would render his service again."<sup>69</sup> The *Zemindars* often harassed and punished the informers

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The *malangis* were the primary suppliers of illicit salt. They concealed it by various means. They produced it by making illicit *khalaris*. Secondly, they concealed a portion of each day's manufactured salt in holes and corners of their *khalaris*. Thirdly, they also concerned their '*khorakee*' salt. (There was a common practice of granting a certain quality of salt to the *malangis* for private consumption). Fourthly, they also collected illicit salt from the aurung *adulders* (a person employed in stamping salt), *chaprasies* and *Ziladas* belonging to the Company's weighment department. This was called gang smuggling. It began when the weighing of salt commenced. The above servants always took excess salt from the *malangis* under plea of dryage. They disposed of their excess salt to the *malangis* for their own advantage. For collecting salt they had illicit golas within their mud walled compounds well guarded and on the immediate bank of a tank into which the salt could be easily thrown to avoid seizure.

After collecting illicit salt, the *malangis* transported it to the house of the head-*malangis* protected in the way by an advance guard (a gang armed with bamboo sticks) and a rear guard. If the journey was short, the men carried the salt themselves, but in case of a long one, bullocks were employed. Numberless *pattaries* (merchant smugglers) and *pykars* purchased this illicit salt from the *malangis* and head-*malangis* paying cash, rice and fuel for the same and conveyed it away for sale in the neighbouring *hats* (village markets) and villages. These *hats* generally commenced about two hours before the Sunset and continued till dusk. Thus the people of the border areas were supplied with articles at prices below the market price of salt purchased at the Company's sales and the dealer also got a bigger profit.

In most cases, the venders of Government salt were the dealers of illicit salt. They collected it from the *malangis*. Under plea of selling Government salt through their retail shops, these licensed venders safely disposed of contraband salt.

There was also the system of *Sadah Rowannah* smuggling by the merchants on a large scale. The smuggled salt could escape the *chowkies* or checking points with the help of '*Sadah Rowannahs*' or blank permits. This was done with the connivance of the ill-paid native officers. The smuggling in these *chowkies* showed the long studied, long practised chicane, deception and fraud of these smugglers.

69 B. R. (Salt) Prog. No. 16; Aug 16, 1854 quoted in Tarasankar Banerjee, *Internal Market of India (1834-1900)*, Calcutta, 1966. 240.

by bringing false cases against them. A letter from Mr. Brownwood, Superintendent, Jellasore Salt Chowkies to Mr. Campbell, Officiating Controller, Government Salt Chowkies on Jan 16, 1854 thus describes the pitiable condition of such informers. "This class of persons being for the most part poor and unfriended, are debarred from coming forward to the assistance of my subordinate or even myself through fear of their *Zemindars* who are all more or less interested in smuggling salt and who always make an example of any infomer, they hear, has given information to the Salt authorities, by either bringing false case against him *benamee* in the mofussil court or maliciously dragged into the Summary Suit Court for arrears of rent under Reg 7 of 1799 and 5 of 1812 either way causing the ruin of the unfortunate informer".<sup>70</sup>

Why did the *Zemindars* engage in smuggling any why did they support the *malangis* for an illicit manufacture of salt? Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee explains the encouragement of the illicit manufacture of salt by the *Zemindars* in terms of the facilities such manufacture offered to the ryots for paying their rent. He argues that the ryots often failed to pay the rents to the *Zemindars* as they had to buy salt at a high price. "So, to ensure rent, a *Zemindar* would care little what frauds were committed on Government. If his ryots were apprehended for smuggling and fined or imprisoned, the *Zemindar* did not get his rent. Naturally he would do his best to get off his ryots if apprehended and to prevent their seizure at all".<sup>71</sup> Dr. Banerjee's argument is only partly valid. In fact, as has been stated earlier that the *Zemindars* encouraged smuggling to compensate for their loss of income from salt. They wanted to paralyse Government-machinery in salt production as a retaliatory measure against salt monopoly. They were also interested in supplying salt to their ryots at cheaper price. Actually the illicit manufacture of salt benefited the *Zemindars* in two ways : the trade in illicit salt was quite lucrative and the rent from the illicit *khalaris* was also considerable.

The undermentioned list of *Zemindars* and *Talookdars* show that they had their own illicit *khalaris* and *coolies*. It also proves how

70 B. R. (Salt) Prog. No. 17; Feb. 17, 1864.

71 T. Banerjee, *op. cit.* 240. The *Zemindars* of Taki even tutored their ryots to resist the execution of the laws in force regarding illicit manufacture.

they earned profits through their own management by directly investing their capital in illicit manufacture of salt.

TABLE—1

NAMES OF SOME OF THE ZEMINDARS AND TALOOKDARS AND  
THE NUMBER OF THEIR ILLICIT KHALARIS<sup>72</sup>

Proprietors	Names of the Places of Zemindars/ Talookdars	Number of Chakas or boiling places	Number of coolies
Aniruddha Roy	Zemindar of Ichapore and Kurgaria	3	6
Baidyanath Poharanje	Zemindar of Rawyah and Purusattampur	20	36
Rajballav Chowdhury	Zemindar of Gorabasam and Erunda	5	10
Darpanarain Roy	Talookdar of Gonga	7	14
Nurdhab Nandi	Talookdar of Polahuck	13	31
Shyamsundar Roy	Talookdar of Kanungochak	2	3
Total : 50 Chakas 100 coolies			

[Source : N. K. Sinha, *Midnapore Salt Papers*, Calcutta, 1954, 132]

In some parts of the Hijli Agency Government discovered only fifty *khalaris* from the possession of three *Zemindars* and three *Talookdars*. They had many other illicit *khalaris* which the Government could not trace out. From this, one could easily assume the position of other areas and also the gravity of the resistance of the *Zemindars*.

Another method used by the *Zemindars* to interfere with Company's salt trade was to levy illegal duties on *rowanna*<sup>73</sup> salt passing through their areas. Raja Baidyanath, *Zemindar* of Gesinabad in the district of Dinajpore, seized the salt-boats of Michael Andrew, a Greek merchant, as he refused to pay duty by furnishing Company's

72 Sinha, *Midnapore Salt Papers*, 132

73 A Pass or Permit issued by the Company.

*rowanna* for the transportation of salt duty-free.<sup>74</sup> As Michael refused to pay duty, Raja Baidyanath prohibited the sale of his salt within his estates. Some *Zemindars* went a step further and directly raided Government establishments. Thus, on Dec 3, 1799, at midnight, Raj Ballav Bhuya, *Zemindar* of nine annas division of pargana Bircool, sent one hundred armed men who attacked the Salt *Cachary* of the place, plundered everything valuable and then set it on fire. They carried public money amounting to about rupees one thousand and eight hundred.<sup>75</sup>

#### 7. *Conditions favourable to the Zemindars*

A curious feature of the *Zemindars'* involvement in salt affairs was that in many cases they were supported by Government officials in their struggle against the farmers. The members of the Calcutta Committee of Revenue themselves indirectly supported the *Zemindars*. This was clearly evident in appointing an *Amin* by the Committee. Though it was to be expected that an *Amin* would act impartially, it is amazing how Bancharam Motilal, the *Amin*, always favoured Gorachand Basak and Ramlochan Palit, the *Kutkinadars* (under-farmers) of the *Zemindar*, in their conflict with Jagamohon Sen, the *Khas* farmer. The *Amin* refused to hear any complaint from Jagamohon against Basak and Palit who forced the *malangis* to take advances for the second time though they had already accepted them from Jagamohon. On the contrary, the *Amin* backed the *gomastas* of Palit and Basak when they compelled the *malangis* of Jagamohon to accept advances. Again, regarding the distribution of *khalaris*, the *Amin* favoured the *Zemindar's* *Kutkinodars* by drastically reducing the number of *khalaries* to be allotted to Jagamohan. He arbitrarily limited the number of *khalaris* to 200 only instead of 733 $\frac{1}{2}$ , and said that whatever he advanced above 200 *khalaris* would be considered as 'forced *dadni*' (advance) and must be refunded. The *gomastas* of Jagamohon protested but the *Amin* paid no heed to that.

Not having received any response to the complaint, the *gomastas* of Jagamohon wrote to their master, "The *Amin* is not as an *Amin*, but he is as Gorachand and Ramlochan. Why did you approve of him when he was appointed? We have wrote you all. Now do

74 B R 1786, ; Prog June 7, 1786.

75 *Smha, Midnapore Salt Papers*, 118.

what you think proper, but we do not see any good".<sup>76</sup> However, when they understood the real motivation behind the appointment of the *Amin*, they wrote to Jagamohon, "We are fools to quarrel with Basak and Palit. Don't we know who they are and don't we know by whose interest, what happened lately was done? To the late Gentlemen of the Committee Therefore, if we wish our own good, we ought to hear and do as he directs or else we shall be ruined."<sup>77</sup> It was also found out that when the Committee had ordered the issuing of *parwanas* in favour of Jagamohon, the *Amin* had immediately suppressed those orders. This was evident from Jagamohon's petition to the Calcutta Committee of Revenue in which he wrote, "There has certainly been some underhand doing of my enemies, which have counteracted the intention of the Committee by repressing and concealing your orders .... perhaps the *Amin* have received them, if so, they wickedly conceal it; for there is no change in their behaviour".<sup>78</sup>

The Calcutta Committee of Revenue even opposed the orders of the Governor-General-in-Council of July 29, 1777 because it proposed to extend some facilities to Jagamohon at the cost of the *Zemindars*. As the quantity of salt production depended on the number of *malangis* employed in it, the *Zemindars* did not want to allow them to work anywhere outside their areas; but for a full utilisation of *khalaris*, the farmers required more *malangis* and they naturally tried to get hold of the *malangis* of the *Zemindari* areas. Thus the contest between the farmers and the *Zemindars* centered on the question of liberty of the *malangis*. The Governor-General-in-Council at last ordered in July 29, 1777 that the *malangis* had the liberty "to work in any district as they please".<sup>79</sup> It showed a definitely anti-*Zemindar* and pro-farmer attitude. The Calcutta Committee of Revenue indirectly favoured the *Zemindars* by opposing the order on the ground of possible loss of revenue. They argued that this liberty to the *malangis* would induce them to migrate to another district in search of higher prices and early advance as they were generally impatient of delayed advances. Therefore, the Committee argued, as the inclinations of the *malangis* would vary, it would create constant fluctuations in the production of salt in different areas. So, the salt revenue would also fall. Thus the *Zemindars* were helped directly by the *Amins* and

76 C.C.R. Vol. 27, 1779; Jan 6, 1779.

77 *Ibid*

78 C.C.R. Vol. 27, 1779; Jan 15, 1779.

79 C.C.R. Vol. 27, 1779; LS No 5; Jan 8, 1779.

indirectly by the Calcutta Committee of Revenue in their struggle with the farmers

After the introduction of the Agency system in 1780, when the *Zemindars* adopted smuggling as a suitable device of resistance, they were assisted by the Government officials. The wealthy *Zemindars* were in league with the men of the preventive establishment.<sup>80</sup> Mr. Baker, Superintendent of Midnapore, wrote to the Magistrate of the district that the *chowkidars*, so far from giving assistance to the preventive officers, took part in the smuggling.<sup>81</sup>

#### 8. *Company's attitude to the resistance*

As collection of revenue was the principal objective of the Company, they naturally helped the farmers in producing the maximum quantity of salt. But at the same time, they did not want to antagonise the *Zemindars* by adopting stern measures against them. Their policy was just to clear away the obstruction put by the *Zemindars* by issuing *parwanas* and if necessary, by a mild use of force through the *Naibs* and other officers. The Company took stronger measures with respect to *Zemindars* causing obstruction to the delivery of salt. Otherwise, particularly regarding obstruction in production they maintained a rather soft policy despite the farmers' repeated alleging that the *Zemindar's* people beat and ill-treated the Company's *peons*. The Company took this stand possibly for two reasons. First, in case of failure of supply of the stipulated quantity of salt, the Company had nothing to lose because the farmers had to pay penalty for supplying less. Secondly, in the early seventies of the 18th century when the Company's administration was hardly stable, they were not willing to enter into a serious conflict with the *Zemindars* who had control over land and the *malangis*.

However, after the introduction of the Agency system when the Company directly controlled the production and sale of salt, a marked difference was noticeable in their attitude. The attitude of the *Zemindars* also changed. Now instead of the farmers, the Company became the rival of the *Zemindars*. For the sake of security of revenue the Company took a stern attitude toward the disaffected *Zemindars*. A series of regulations were passed to stop the irregular and illegal activities of the *Zemindars*. This suggests the growing strength of the resistance of the *Zemindars*.

80 B.R. (Salt), Prog No 16, 1854 quoted in T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 239.

81 B R (Salt), Vol 545. Prog. No 19, Feb 17, 1854.

The Company took all precautionary measures to stop smuggling but failed. When they realised that the *Zemindars* were the mainspring of this illicit transactions of salt, they desperately took a rather unusual measure to suppress them. In Section 27 of the Act of 1838 it was laid down that the landholders "who shall knowingly omit to give the required information shall be liable to conviction before the judge of any Zillah to a fine of Rs. 500 for every *khali* established in their lands" and that "such knowledge shall not be required to be established by direct proof but may be inferred from circumstances at the discretion of the judge."<sup>82</sup> The Regulation was presumably unfair to the *Zemindars* since it was quite impossible for a *Zemindar* to know of a remote village where a *malangi* might have established an illicit *khali* in his cottage. A *Zemindar* deserved punishment when he was found guilty of suppressing the facts about illicit *khalaris* in his estates. The Board of Revenue, however, justified the provision for prosecuting the *Zemindars* on the basis of circumstantial evidence: "To prove by direct evidence that a *Zemindar* had knowledge of the existence of illicit salt works is in the majority of cases quite impossible and when the circumstances are such that his knowledge may be fairly inferred, the *Zemindar* is justly punishable either for neglecting to communicate the knowledge if he possess it, or if he possesses it not for neglecting the duties of his situation in not making himself acquainted as he might and ought to have done, with what is passing in his estate....."<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, many *Zemindars* were prosecuted on the charge of withholding information about illicit manufacture of salt in their areas. The British Indian Association protested against such prosecutions and presented a petition in 1854 to the Governor-General-in-Council.<sup>84</sup> The editor of the *Sambad Pravakar* also wrote against this regulation and expressed sympathy for the *Zemindars*.<sup>85</sup> However, in many cases, the Comptroller of Salt Chowkies, remitted the fine, imposed on the *Zemindars*, fully or partly.<sup>86</sup> It indicates the unjustifiability and peculiarity of the Act. Actually, the Government knew very well that the *Zemindars* were the mainstay behind smuggling and without their co-operation it was impossible to carry on this illicit

82 T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 240

83 Government of Bengal, Miscellaneous Revenue Progs No. 1, Oct. 26, 1854, quoted in T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 242

84 B.R. Prog No. 37; March 31, 1854, quoted in T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 240.

85 Benoy Ghose, *Samaik Parte Banglar Samaj Chitra*, Vol. I, 86-88.

86 B.R. (Salt), Vol. 545, 1854 Prog. No. 53, Feb 10, 1854.

trade. But they could not be controlled despite earnest efforts on the part of the administration. Therefore being desperate the Government arbitrarily passed such an unreasonable act in effort to force the *Zemindars* to give up clandestine dealing in salt by putting indirect but unjustifiable pressure upon them. All these prove nothing but the strength of the resistance of the *Zemindars*.

#### 9. *Impact of the resistance*

The fall in the production of salt was an important result of the resistance of the *Zemindars*. The farmers failed to supply the stipulated quantity of salt to the Company. Panchananda Dutt, farmer of Hijli, had a deficit of about 75 thousand maunds of salt. Actually, the farmers were in a deplorable situation because of the united resistance of the *Zemindars*. They tried their best to maximise production but failed miserably. The following table would clearly indicate the extent of the farmers' losses.

TABLE—2

DEFICIT IN PRODUCTION OF SALT BY RASIK LAL DUTT AND  
OTHERS, THE FARMERS OF ROYMANGAL AND THE  
EXTENT OF THEIR LOSSES<sup>87</sup>

Year	Quantity of salt to be delivered to the Company	Quantity estimated for surplus production to the farmers for which they made additional advances to the malangis	Total quantity of salt	Salt delivered by the malangis	Deficit	Amount of Loss
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs. a.p.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1774	2,35,208	2,20,682.25	4,55,890.25	2,18,800	2,37,090.25	1.77,450.9-3

[Source : Calcutta Committee of Revenue Progs. Aug 26, 1776]

87 Calcutta Committee of Revenue Progs. Aug 26, 1776.

It is clear from column No. 5 of the Table that the farmers had nearly succeeded in supplying the stipulated quantity of salt to the Government. So the farmers' complaint that they failed to deliver this quantity of salt because of the *Zemindars'* resistance is not valid. They could not realise only the surplus salt for which they made additional advances of their own to the *malangis*.<sup>88</sup>

Two conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. First, as the failure of the farmers to realise the surplus salt belied their hopes of earning profit, they repeatedly made petitions to the Government that even the stipulated quantity of salt could not be collected due to various reasons. They tried to keep aside certain quantities of salt to be sold as surplus salt informing the Government that the full quantity of salt, contracted for, was not realised and thus tried to get remission for not supplying the stipulated quantity of salt. So the farmers were capable of delivering the salt, contracted for, to the Government. But in doing that they would have to sacrifice profit which no farmer was willing to go without. Secondly, the *Zemindars'* resistance only foiled the farmers' attempt at making profit for which they took 'Salt Farm' through auction. Some amount of surplus salt was definitely produced by the *manangis* but the farmers could hardly ever collect it. A large portion of it usually passed into the hands of the *Zemindars* and *malangis*, who smuggled this salt and earned profits for themselves by playing a trick on the farmers. In this manner, the *Zemindars* were successful in compensating for their losses and at the same time made the farmers losers for spending a huge amount of extra advance-money from their own treasury.

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88 The farmers were interested to take 'farms' by auction for profit. They always hoped for collection more than the stipulated quantity of salt, mentioned at the time of auction. With expectation for this surplus salt, they invested additional advances of their own. Actually, the surplus salt would have been the profits of the farmers for which they took farms. But due to *Zemindars'* resistance they failed to collect surplus-salt. The farmers, then, by concealing certain quantities of salt, told the Company that they were unable to collect even the stipulated quantities contracted for. They, then, smuggled it to illicit dealers to compensate as much as much as possible for investing additional money from their own pockets. The Government wrongly believed that the farmers failed to collect even the quantity of salt, stipulated for.

As a result of the fall in the salt production, the Company's revenue from salt also decreased. The following table illustrates the point.

TABLE—3

GRADUAL DECREASE OF COMPANY'S  
SALT REVENUE DURING THE FIVE YEARS' FARMING SYSTEM

Year	Salt Revenue
1773-74	£ 2,29,192
1774-75	£ 1,30,206
1775-76	£ 1,473

[Source : *West Bengal District Records (New Series)*

*Midnapore Correspondence of the Salt Districts ;  
Tamlook Salt Division (Letters Record)*  
edited by B. Ghose and S. K. Bose, Calcutta, 1974, Introduction,  
'C']

The Government finances thus were also seriously affected by the resistance of the *Zemindars*. Realising all these difficulties the Company placed the *Zemindars* in charge of the production of salt in 1777. It was certainly a measure of the success of their resistance.

The increase in the smuggling of salt was a natural consequence of the *Zemindars*' resistance. Under their protection and support the ill-paid *malangis* concealed a large amount of the farmers' salt and delivered it to the smugglers to compensate for the low prices offered to them. The *Zemindars* were also directly involved in these illicit transactions of salt. Interestingly enough, the farmers themselves were involved in the smuggling. Having fallen in arrears, the farmers occasionally sold the salt clandestinely to the smugglers to make up for their losses as far as possible. In 1773, the whole of the deficiency in *Seranjam* salt<sup>89</sup> of Tamlook appeared to have arisen from private sales by the farmers.<sup>90</sup> Actually, smuggling, for which

<sup>89</sup> Salt for which the farmers contracted with the Company and received advances exclusive of that which formed a part of the revenue.

<sup>90</sup> P.R.B.C. Vol. 9, 1774, Prdg No. 10, Feb 22, 1774.

the *Zemindars* were largely responsible, was one of the major factors for failure of the Five Years' Farming system in salt

Like the farmers, the salt merchants also suffered due to smuggling in the 1830's. The salt market of Bengal considerably declined as a result of smuggling and a huge amount of salt remained uncleared in the Company's golas. The puzzled merchants wrote a petition to the Board of Customs, Salt & Opium complaining that the present situation had been created by smuggling and demanded intervention of the Government. They mentioned that no less than 10 lakh maunds of salt had been conveyed illicitly for consumption from only three districts—Hijli, Tamlook and 24-Parganas.<sup>91</sup> The Board at first did not agree with the opinion of the merchants and attributed the losses to their limited understanding of the salt business. They even came to the conclusion that they were not merchants at all. However, they eventually concluded that, "Perhaps it is most safe, after all, to assume that increased smuggling is the sole cause of that state of the salt market, which perplexes us nearly as much as it has embarrassed the *dhuratia*<sup>92</sup> merchants".<sup>93</sup>

The Government took two very important steps towards checking smuggling. First, in 1836, the system of restricted sales to the highest bidder, introduced in 1786, was cancelled and free sale at a fixed price without any ceiling on quantity was reintroduced.<sup>94</sup> This change in the system of sale gave a great blow to the *dhuratia* or big merchants who had enormous capital and could buy up huge amount of salt through auction, in order to sell to their under-merchants at a suitable price of their own. These *dhuratia* merchants practically formed a sub-monopoly in the salt trade of Bengal which was mainly due to the system of auction sale. But now deprived of it these merchants found themselves in a critical condition unable in future to re-establish their control on the salt trade. It really marked the beginning of the decline of the salt merchants of Bengal.

91 *Appendix to the Report from the Select Committee on Salt (1836)*  
No. 19, 65.

92 Big Merchants.

93 *Appendix to the Report from the Select Committee on Salt (1836)*  
No. 19, 82

94 B.B. Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, 18.

Secondly, in 1838 the Government passed an Act making a *Zemindar* liable to penalty of rupees five hundred per *khalarī* if any one established a *khalarī* within his *Zemindari* with his knowledge for a period of more than ten days. Such knowledge need not be established by direct proof but could be inferred by the Judge from circumstantial evidence.<sup>95</sup> These two measures of the Government clearly prove the success of the long-drawn resistance of the *Zemindars*. It can be interpreted as a successful retaliation of the *Zemindar* through ruining the new merchant-group who had flourished under the protection and favour of the East India Company. By actively encouraging smuggling they dealt a serious blow at the salt merchants who had exploited the people by forming sub-monopolies.<sup>96</sup>

The *malangis* could however scarcely take the advantage of the conflict between the *Zemindars* and the farmers and demand increased prices of salt. It is true that Jagamohan tried to increase the collection of *malangis* by enhancing the price of salt, but that did not come into effect due to the strong opposition by the Calcutta Committee of Revenue which asked the farmer to compel the *malangis* to work at the same rate.<sup>97</sup> In fact, the *malangis* and their families were harrassed by both the parties on the issue of payment of advances. The occasional resolution of the Government—a *malangi* should be a free agent—could scarcely be carried out into practice because the poor *malangis* had no chances against the power and might of both the *Zemindars* and farmers. Before 1765 these ill-paid poor peasants were oppressed only by the *Zemindars* but now they were exploited by both the *Zemindars* and farmers and that to a greater degree. It is true that when the smuggling flourished the *malangis* got some advantages under the protection of the *Zemindars* but that did not really improve their lot.

95 T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 241.

96 The editor of the *Samachar Chandrika* wrote, "The poor people are now suffering very much from the price of salt and opium having been greatly raised. This is owing to some person's having monopolised these articles, for his own advantages by selling them at a high price, rather than from the scarcity of the things themselves. It can in no wise become a rich man to deprive poormen of salt (which is their best sance) in order to add to their immense wealth". Translated from the *Samachar Chandrika* in the *Calcutta Journal of Politics and General Literature*, Vol. III, No. 110, May 8, 1822, 112.

97 C.C.R. Vol 27, 1779, Prog Feb 3, 1779.

## GLOSSARY

*Aduldar*—A person employed in stamping salt.

*Ajoora*—The term comes from the Arabic word Ajoor which means a wage-earner.

*Amin*—An Inspector, an intendant.

*Barkandaj*—A watchman; guard.

*Bazar*—Market.

*Beopari*—A travelling dealer; a small trader.

*Cachari*—A place of business; an office.

*Char*—A bank exposed by submersion.

*Chakla*—A division of a country consisting of several Parganas—probably a corruption of the Sanskrit term chakra, a wheel, circle.

*Chakas*—Boiling places.

*Chaprasi*—Native Orderly.

*Chop*—Symbol.

*Chowkey*—A guard station.

*Chowkidar*—Watchman.

*Coota*—Stubble, used as fuel for boiling salt.

*Cowry*—Fish shells.

*Dadan*—A payment in advance.

*Daroga*—Native Inspector; An officer in charge of a division of the Salt Agency.

*Dewan*—Head of a department.

*Ganj*—Village mart

*Gola*—Ware house or store house.

*Gomasta*—An Indian agent or manager.

*Hat*—Village market held only on certain days in a week.

*Jama*—Revenue or fixed rental.

*Kandy*—A heap.

*Khas*—Special management.

*Khorakee*—Diet allowance.

*Mohrir*—An accountant

*Monam*—A subdivision of an Aurung (a manufacturing district).

*Moindars*—Salt-boilers.

*Mocoof*—Suspended, ceased or stopped.

*Moshahira*—An allowance or compensation—10% on the neat collections of the year.

*Naib*—A deputy.

*Parwana*—An order or command, sometimes a grant.

*Patta*—A deed or lease comprising all that relates to the rents payable by the ryots for the lands they hold

*Peon*—An inferior officer

*Pike*—The watchman

*Pykars*—An Intermediary dealer.

*Rowanna*—A certificate from a Collector of Customs authorising goods to pass without payment of further duty.

*Samad*—A written authority.

*Tahsildar*—Revenue collector, head of a Talook.

*Taffalies*—Salt-boilers

*Talookdar*—The owner of an estate comprising a number of villages.

*Thana*—Police Station

*Thika*—A farm of salt works, paying either in money or a given return of salt.

*Ziladar*—The Officer-in-Charge of a district.

*Zemindar*—Land holder—Proprietor.

## AN ACCOUNT OF GANDHI'S VISIT TO ITALY BASED ON THE CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN SOURCES

S. K. MITTAL AND GITA SRIVASTAVA

Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Italy in 1931 excited diplomatic circles, particularly in London. The object of this paper is to bring to light an account of Gandhi's visit to Italy and his activities there as narrated in different Italian sources, both published and unpublished.

By 1931 Mahatma Gandhi had come to be known abroad as the leader of India's non-violent rebellion against the British imperialism.<sup>1</sup> The Gandhi phenomenon was a matter of acute anxiety and inquisitive curiosity. To the British and to the Government of India he caused great anxiety while the attitude of the thinking Western world towards him was one of inquisitive curiosity.

After the sittings of the Round Table Conference Gandhi decided to return to India via Paris, Switzerland and Italy. Even before Gandhi had reached Italy he was being talked of and referred to by an Italian Bishop,<sup>2</sup> Lando Ferretti, as early as 7th December 1931. The Bishop told his audience at the Church of Aquila that the Pope would receive Gandhi at the Vatican. He, however, added that the Duce will not receive Gandhi nor Gandhi, on his own, would call on the Duce as was apparent from the statements published in the Government press.<sup>3</sup>

### *Gandhi in Switzerland :*

Gandhi was being pursued by the Italian secret police right from the moment he set foot on the Swiss soil.<sup>4</sup> The first secret police report noted the arrival of Gandhi at Lausanne on 6 December, 1931.

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1 *Il Messaggero*, Rome, 12 December, 1931.

2 *Police Report*, Rome, 7 December, 1931, *Ministero Dell'Interno, Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurzza, Divisione Polizia Politica*, No 33783, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome*

3 *Ibid*,

4 *Police Report*, Losanna, 10 December, 1931.

He went straight to Villeneuve, where he stayed with Romain Rolland, 'the semi-pacifist and semi-communist' (*semipacifista and semicomunista*) literateur.<sup>5</sup> Gandhi met the Swiss revolutionary, Leon Nicolo di Ginevra, and told him that the "Indian movement was not only directed against the British imperialism but it aimed especially at the creation of republic of workers".<sup>6</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi stayed for five days at Villeneuve as a guest of Romain Rolland.<sup>7</sup> In his speeches and conversations he covered subjects as diverse as God, non-violence, music, religion and disarmament.<sup>8</sup> He spoke of God as 'Truth'. It seems that the Swiss were happier when Gandhi talked about religion and God than when he entreated them to disarm and disband their armies.<sup>9</sup> This is very clear from the secret Police report dated 17 December, 1931.

"The Indian prophet Mahatma Gandhi had stayed as the guest of pacifist-communist Romain Rolland in Villeneuve for five days. He addressed two meetings, one at Ginevra and the other at Lausane attended by important leaders of Social-Democratic Party and by the members of Liberal Party etc. He was introduced as an ultra-pacifist. We are suspecting that the Mahatma has communist leanings".<sup>10</sup>

The secret police report, quoting an extract from a widely read and a Sober newspaper '*Gazette de Lausanne*', commented that "one serious organ like the *Gazette de Lausanne* criticised the stupid declaration about Swiss armament made by Mahatma", and wrote, "It is better for Gandhi to leave and make his prophesies elsewhere as he had enough misused our hospitality".<sup>11</sup>

The police reports, mentioned above, only described the gist of the speeches of Gandhi and the reaction of the people to them. But another source<sup>12</sup> gave not only 'the gist of Gandhi's utterances but

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, 7 December, 1931

8 *Il Giornale d'Italia*, Saturday, 12 December, 1931; Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, London, p. 424.

9 *Police Report*, Losanna, 17 December, 1931.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Il Giornale d'Italia*, Rome, 11 December, 1931.

also described his daily routine. Gandhi spun wool, took his vegetarian meal and answered questions put to him in the Central Hall of the Society of Concert in Ginevra. This source also indicated that his anti-military speeches were not applauded by the audience.

*Gandhi in Milan :*

Gandhi left his kind host and proceeded to Italy. His last message to his host, in reply to the question, "what would you like me to do in grateful memory of your visit?", was "come and meet India".<sup>13</sup> Gandhi bade farewell to Romain Rolland and reached Milan at 8.30 p.m. on 11 December, 1931 accompanied by his retinue. As usual with Gandhi, he preferred to travel in third class. His retinue comprised 15 persons<sup>14</sup> including his son Devdas, poetess Sarojini Naidu and three secretaries. Throughout his journey from Swiss border to Milan he was greeted warmly by huge crowds which assembled at various stations—Arona, Galarate, Sesto Calende etc. that lay across his journey. Addressing the crowds at various stations Gandhi reiterated his faith (*fede*) in God, love and non-violence. He expressed his confidence in the victory of the cause which he represented.<sup>15</sup> He stayed for about quarter of an hour at the gigantic Milan station where a big crowd of journalists, 'bearded Indians', some Englishmen and multitude of Italians assembled to meet him.<sup>16</sup> The rush was so great that the authorities had to abandon the arrangements made especially for the occasion.<sup>17</sup> Wrapped in nicker<sup>18</sup> (loin cloth) and shawl, Gandhi emerged from

13 Robert Payne, *op. cit.*, p 424.

14 According to *La Tribuna* dated, 12 December, 1931, he was accompanied by twentyone persons. According to *Giornale di Sicilia* Palermo he was travelling with his son Devdas, poetess Naidu, three secretaries and other fifteen persons, while *Corriere della Sera* and *Il Messaggero* record that he was followed by twelve persons. According to *Giornale d'Italia* he was followed by nine persons besides his son secretaries, according to *La Nazione* there were twentyseven persons in the retinue, while *Il Popolo d'Italia* records the presence of fifteen persons besides his son, secretaries and Naidu.

15 *La Stampa*, Florence, Torino, 12 December, 1931.

16 *La Nazione*, 12 December, 1931, *Il Messaggero*, Rome; *La Stampa* Torino; *Corriere della Sera*, Milano; *Police Report of Milan*, Archivio Centrale Dello Stato, Rome.

17 *Corriere Della Sera*, Milan, 12 December, 1931. According to the police report, such a huge crowd has collected that the *Report of Milan*, 12 December, 1931, Archivio Centrale Dello Stato, Rome.

18 *Il Messaggero*, Rome, 12 December, 1931.

his third class cabin to acknowledge the greetings of the crowd in his characteristic manner. He was presented homages by persons, one of whom was the professor of Oriental languages at the University of Milan. The professor, Pizzagalli, presented to him his books, one of which was titled '*Aspects and Problems of Indian Civilization*'. He also wrote and read a note in Sanskrit which meant: "The king is honoured only in his kingdom but a sage is honoured all over the earth".<sup>19</sup> The note prayed for his long life as he was "full of virtue, a man of God".<sup>20</sup> Signor Brondi presented to Gandhi two volumes of *A Philology and Philosophy in Sanskrit*.<sup>21</sup> Gandhi requested the hard-put volunteers to keep the crowds atleast one meter away from him. He narrated the incident of Poris where the enthusiastic mobs had crushed his foot.<sup>22</sup> After initial annoyance, Gandhi made an exception and acceded to the request of the authorities to travel in a first class coach from Milan to Brindisi.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Gandhi in Rome and Vatican*

The next morning Gandhi's train reached Rome at 8.30 a.m., the metropolis of Italy. He stayed in Rome for two days; visited several places and met numerous persons including Mussolini. At Rome he was to stay with General Moris, a close friend of Romain Rolland. General Moris, under some wrong impression, reached late at the station and Gandhi had to wait for some time. This interregnum was utilized by journalists and correspondent. They put several questions to which Gandhi replied with grace and ease.<sup>24</sup> The owner of a posh villa, Baron Fassini, requested Gandhi through Dr. Gina Gabrielli, the translator of Romain Rolland's biography of the Mahatma, to stay at his villa. Gandhi politely declined the

19 *Corriere Della Sera*, Milan 12 December, 1931.

20 *Ibid*

21 *Ibid.*; *La Nazione*, Florence, 12 December, 1931.

22 *Corriere Della Sera*, Milan, 12 December, 1931.

23 At the station of Milan the Italian Government offered him to travel in first class. He acceded to the request saying: "I wanted the third in England—he said—but in Italy the first will be alright". The decision was received with great satisfaction by the Italians and immediately a beautiful cabin with velvet and with heating arrangement was attached to the train. (*Corriere Della Sera*, Milan, 12 December, 1931).

24 *Il Popolo d'Italia*, Milan, December 12, 1931.

25 *Il Giornale d'Italia*, Rome, 13 December, 1931.

offer.<sup>26</sup> The journalists were still busy in asking questions when General Moris arrived at the station to escort him to his villa.<sup>27</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi's love for children and his inquisitiveness to know the methods of pedagogy, set in motion by the Montessory movement, took him to a Montessory Academy.<sup>28</sup> After having stayed for about an hour in the academy, Gandhi drove to Vatican, the Mecca of Christendom.<sup>29</sup> His visit to Vatican had been described as being "purely artistic" in character.<sup>30</sup> The authorities of Vatican museum made exception for Gandhi and relaxed time restrictions so that the exalted guest might see the rich treasure of aesthetic expressions. He was not given any pontifical reception<sup>31</sup> and the Pope did not extend the courtesy of meeting him on the ground that Gandhi did not dress himself properly.<sup>32</sup> Gandhi stood in reverential silence at the Sistine Chapel contemplating the majestic figure of the dying Christ.<sup>33</sup> He was so moved that the tears trickled down his cheeks.<sup>34</sup> He then came out and ascended the heights of the *Piazza del Monumento* and *Mostra dell'Acqua Paolo* to have the full view of Rome.<sup>35</sup>

Mussolini had granted an interview to the Mahatma.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Gandhi accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Mirabehn and General Moris set out for the Duce's office at the *Piazza Venezia*.<sup>37</sup> He was received by the chief of Governor at the guarded doorway and was led in silence upto the desk of Mussolini. The Fascist Chieftain and the Apostle of Non-violence talked for twenty minutes.<sup>38</sup> Gandhi

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, 15 December, 1931; *Il Messaggero* and *Il Corriere della Sera* of the same date.

29 *L'Osservatore Romano*, Vatican, 15 December, 1931.

30 *Corriere Della Sera*, Milan, 15 December, 1931.

31 *Il Gazzettino*, 15 December, 1931.

32 *Police Report*, Rome, 14 December, 1931; *Archivio Stato*, Rome

33 *Carriere Della Sera*, 15 December, 1931; Robert Payne, *op. cit.*, p 427.

34 *Collected Works of Gandhi*, Vol. XLVIII, 1971, p 434; Robert Yne, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

35 *Il Messaggero*, Rome, 15 December, 1931.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Robert Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

38 According to official report the meeting lasted for twenty minutes, but the Police Report (16 December, 1931, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome) describe that the meeting lasted precisely for twelve minutes, while Report Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 426, reports that the meeting lasted perhaps for ten minutes.

tried to elicit Mussolini's views on the 'Indian question' but the latter was evasive and talked of Rome and the former's impressions on Italy.<sup>39</sup> Mussolini advised General Moris the he should show the maternity and Children welfare Centre and young Italians' military exercises to Gandhi.<sup>40</sup> The Duce's advise was nothing short of mandatory instructions. Moris took Gandhi to a maternity home and to a children's Centre.<sup>41</sup> Gandhi was made to see wearisome spectacle of processions of well-dressed *Ballila*, the military organization of fascist youth.<sup>42</sup>

Back to Moris villa after visiting Montessori school, Vatican, and meeting with Mussolini, the prayers were chanted in the hall of the Villa, the electric lights were put off and the only light that gleamed the atmosphere was coming from the woodfire burning in the ornamental fireplace. In the flicker of the fire Gandhi chanted some verses of *Bhagwan Gita*<sup>43</sup>. Gandhi then sat quietly spinning on marble floor while many visitors poured in. The seventeen year old princess, Maria of Savoy, the youngest daughter of Victor Emmanuel, came with a basket of figs-*fichi d'India*<sup>44</sup>. The most important visitor, who left a deep impression on Gandhi, was Signora Albertini, most talented daughter of Tolstoy, the Russian sage<sup>45</sup>.

According to the testimony of Mabadev Desai, Gandhi addressed a woman's conference<sup>46</sup>. Curiously enough none of the Italian sources indicate that the conference was ever held. Desai wrote that the Mahatma told Italian women about the heroism of Indian women, their tearing off age-old custom of veil, their picketing on foreign

39 Police Report, 16 December, 1931, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

40 Robert Payne, *Payne, op. cit.*, p 426.

41 *Giornale d'Italia*, Rome, 15 December, 1931.

42 *Ibid.*, While leaving Rome he left message for the Under-Secretary of the political education of O.N.B. (*Ufficio Nazionale di Ballila*) of Rome, saying, "Convey to Hon'ble Ricci and to the Managers of all the Ballila works of Rome that I am carrying with myself a very sympathetic impression which I shall never forget" (*Dite all'On. Ricci e di dirigenti tutti dell'opera Ballila di Roma che ho ripostato un'impressione simpateticissima che non diventi chero mai*), *Ibid.*

43 Robert Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 427

44 *La Stampa*, Turin, 14 December, 1931; *Police Report*, 14 December, 1931, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome; Robert Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

45 Robert Payne, *op. cit.*, p 428.

46 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XLVII, 1971, p.

cloth and liquor shops and their non-violent struggle against British imperialism<sup>47</sup>. It appears that Gandhi addressed to those women who called on him at the Moris villa where he stayed in Rome. The Italian journalists were not present and Mahadev Desai, as his principal secretary, recorded in his diary Gandhi's utterances before those women.

Gandhi left Rome on Sunday, the 14th December, 1931 at 8.40 p.m. for Brindisi, where he boarded the ship, the *Pilsna*, for his voyage to Bombay. He was accorded a warm send off by his admirers who broke into rupturous acclamations.

#### THE CONTROVERSIES

##### *Pope's Refusal to See Gandhi*

Gandhi's visit to Italy is not politically important, yet it raised some controversies. The British bourgeoisie could not swallow the warm welcome accorded to the Mahatma in Italy. It was too much for the British that the Pope, Mussolini, and the princess Maria of the House of Savoy, should agree to meet an Indian agitator. They were afraid that the 'Indian question' would assume greater importance internationally. Besides, the lurking fear of harm Gandhi phenomenon had done to British capital and commerce and what it was bound to do in the future had seized the British. Therefore, they put obstacles in Gandhi's way to stalk his meeting with the Pope. They succeeded in putting off the meeting. As indicated earlier, on the testimony of Lando Ferretti, the Pope had agreed to meet Gandhi, but later on the meeting was called off on the pretext of Gandhi's dressing himself improperly. But the reason was pretended rather than real. The Italian archival sources mention that the Pope thought that the meeting might create bitter feeling in British embassy. These sources also unambiguously mention that England did not want the Pope should receive Gandhi for it would alienate Roman Catholic Missions in India which were being run under British protection. The British authorities were afraid that the meeting might result in bringing the Roman Catholic in India to the side of the Mahatma<sup>48</sup>. But the

47 *Ibid.*, Extracts from Mahadev Desai's "Letters from Europe".

48 The example of missionaries, taking side with the people against the British mercantile interests during the indigo disturbances in Bengal, 1858-61, was not lost to the British.

correspondent of the capitalist controlled *Times* reported circuitously "The Pope has not received the great Indian saint because he was afraid of concurrence"<sup>49</sup>.

*Visit of Princess Maria*

The British diplomacy did not succeed in restraining princess Maria from meeting Gandhi. The enraged correspondent of the *Times* commented, "... it would have been better if Gandhi would have been absolutely ignored by Italian authorities as had been the case with English embassy. Instead of that England has positive impression that the princess of the House of Savoy has gone to visit an Indian Agitator. But perhaps the visit dealt only with curiosity and nothing else"<sup>50</sup>.

*Gandhi's Pronouncements quoted in Giornale d'Italia*

It was quite obvious that Gandhi's meeting with Mussolini was disliked by the British. The British dubbed the Mahatma as an 'Indian agitator', who rebelled against the British Government, the friend of Italy<sup>51</sup>. It depicted how Gandhi's agitation has shattered the British economy as a consequence of which the British people are suffering<sup>52</sup>. The British diplomatic circles made it known to the Italian Government that the British Government viewed with concern Gandhi's pronouncements particularly made to the journalists of 'Giornale d'Italia'<sup>53</sup>. The Italian Police Report noted, on the evidence of the British Consular, that the British Government was greatly agitated (... *nei circoli governativi inglesi regna una grande agitazione*)<sup>54</sup>. The correspondents of the *Times* wondered why was Gandhi given so much honour on his visit to the Fascist institutions<sup>55</sup>.

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49 *Police Report*, 14 December, 1931, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

50 *Police Report*, 16 December, 1931, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome

51 *Police Report*, 14 December, 1931, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Police Report*, 23 December, 1931, Genova, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Police Report*, 16 December, 1931, Rome, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

The kernel of the controversy centred round Gandhi's pronouncements reported in the *Giornale d'Italia*<sup>56</sup>. Gandhi was reported to have said: "the Round Table Conference which has brought definite break off the relation between the Indian nation and the British Government, has been for us long and slow agony. She (India) is slave but she makes clear its spirit of nationalism to the British authorities .... I shall return India to resume the movement (civil disobedience movement) against England....We shall not pay taxes, we shall not work for England, isolating British authority completely, their politics and institutions. The boycott shall be unprecedented"<sup>57</sup>.

The correspondent of the *Giornale d'Italia* elaborated the theme of Indian *independenza* and the future impact the Indian independence would exercise on the world in general and on Asia in particular<sup>58</sup>. The British took umbrage over Gandhi's statements in London and in Rome and pointed out their incongruity. Gandhi was asked to affirm the correctness of the reported statement in *Giornale d'Italia*. He described the reporting of the Italian press as being the 'fruit of fantasy'<sup>59</sup>. Gandhi denied to have made any declaration of war against the British either in England or in Rome.

### *The Impressions*

Gandhi's impressions on Italy were both good and bad. He praised the hospitality of the Italian people, their discipline and administrative efficiency<sup>60</sup>. He was particularly charmed by Signora Albertini and the 'Cross at the Vatican'<sup>61</sup>. He did not consider Italian art very superior to India's<sup>62</sup>. He also looked with horror at the spirit of militarism being fostered in Fascist Italy. He murmured to 'somebody'<sup>63</sup>, "the sickening sight of small children

56 *Il Giornale d'Italia* Rome, 15 December, 1931, (1st Page).

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Police Report*, 23 December, 1931, Genova, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

60 *Il Giornale d'Italia* Rome, 13 December, 1931, *Corriere Della Sera*, Milan 12, December, 1931.

61 Robert Payne, *The Life and death of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 428, London ; C.W.G. Vol. XLVII p. 434, 1971.

62 C.W.G., Vol. XLIX, p. 37. A Letter to Prem Behan, Katak, dated, 25 January, 1932.

63 *Police Repo*, 21 December, 1932. *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome, "Ho visto cose orrende : piccole pani maneggiare piccole armi", I have seen horrible things : Band of little children eating pieces of bread.

dragging canons and rifles"<sup>64</sup>. His visit to the *Ballila* in Rome, a military organization of Fascist youth, was exploited by France<sup>65</sup>. The cinematographers of Paris projected films delineating a bewildered Gandhi, with a disapproving smile on his face, and bands of parading youths armed with military equipments<sup>66</sup>. The French journalists ironically commented, "Really it is curious to ascertain that before Gandhi, apostle of universal peace and of absolute disarmament, the fascism could not do better than to file a group of young boys armed with rifles, dragging canons and machine guns"<sup>67</sup>.

Looking back on his journey to Italy, Gandhi recalled the heavy face of Mussolini, "the butcher with the cat's eye"<sup>68</sup>. But Musolini had all praise for the Mahatma. Not only did he grant him an interview, obviously in the face of British opposition, but organized a musical concert in his honour, in a local cinema hall, situated at the street of villa 'Torlonia'<sup>69</sup>. Introducing Gandhi before the picked Italian aristocracy, Mussolini introduced the guest in tones of worshipful hagiography<sup>70</sup> :

"He is a saint, a genius, a rare thing, who uses goodness as an instrument. Perhaps he is one of the few in the world who truly understands the people and British imperial politics. If India is liberated one day, it will be due to this man... and he says to me that he is sure that he will liberate his people during his life time".

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64 *Police Report*, 9 January, 1932, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato*, Rome.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*

68 Robert Payne, *The life and death of Mahatma Gandhi*, London, p. 428.

69 Rachele Mussolini, *La Mia Vita Con Benito*, 1948, Milano, pp. 110-111.

70 Rachele Mussolini, *La Mia Vita Con Benito*, 1948, Milano, pp. 110-111.

## DOCUMENTS

Reserved (Riservate) Mod. 459

INTERNAL MINISTRY (*MINESTERO DELL'INTERNO*)

Under the General Direction of Public Security—Political Police Division,  
(*Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza—Divisione Polizia Politica*)

GANDHI

No. 33783

*Roma, 7 Dicembre 1931*

*A proposito di Gandhi e del male che ne ha fatto Lando Ferretti ad Aquila, si dice che venendo a Roma sarà ricevuto dal Papa.*

*Da quello che ne ha detto il Capo dell'Uwcio Stampa del Capo del Governo si devrebbe desumere che Gandhi non sarà ricevuto dal Duce o che Egli stesso non voglia andarci.*

In connection with Gandhi and to the harm done by Lando Ferretti<sup>1</sup> at Aquila<sup>2</sup> it is said that on coming to Rome Gandhi would be received by the Pope.

From the statement of the Head of the Government press it can be inferred that Gandhi would not be received by the Duce<sup>3</sup> nor Gandhi himself would like to pay a visit to the Duce.

*Losanna, 10 Dicembre 1931*

*Possiamo informare che il 6 dicembre l'indiano Gandhi è giunto in questa città, proseguendo subito per Villeneuve dove è ospite del pacifista comunista Romain Rolland. Onde provare ancora una volta le sue idee nettamente rivoluzionarie Gandhi ha avuto un colloquio anche col capo rivoluzionario svizzero Leon Nicolo di Ginevra, al quale ha dichiarato che "il movimento hindous non è soltanto diretto contro l'imperialismo inglese, ma che intende soprattutto creare una repubblica di lavoratori".*

1 Bishop at the church of Aquila.

2 A city in Central Italy

3 Refers to Mussolini.

We can inform that Gandhi has arrived in this city on 6 December, proceeding immediately for Villeneuve where h is a guest of semi-pacifist and semi-communist Romain Rolland. Inorder to demonstrate once again his distinct revolutionary ideas Gandhi had a meeting also with Swiss revolutionary leader Leon Nicolo of Ginevra, to whom he declared that "Indian movement is not only directed against the English Imperialism, but that it intends especially to create a republic of the workers.

*Milano, li 12 Dicembre 1931*

*Arrivo a lieve sosta di Gandhi.*

*Ieri sera giunse dalla Svizzera l'Indiano Gandhi. Per l'occasione si era radunata alla stazione centrale un'imponente folla appena trattenuuta dalla forza pubblica, tanto che fu dovuta sospendere la distribuzione dei biglietti d'ingresso.*

*L'Indiano ed il segretario col seguito sostarono circa un'ora e nel frattempo il Mahatma dovette apporre su cartoline e documenti d'ogni specie la sua firma, ciò che fece con visibile compiacimento.*

*Molto favorevolmente commentata la concessione al vecchio Mahatma e seguito di una vettura di I° classe. Alla partenza fu salutato da vivi applausi. Nella breve sosta il Mahatma fu avvicinato da qualche giornalista che chiese la sua impressione sull'Italia, impressione buona, rispose il Mahatma, ma che avrebbe completato dopo la sosta a Roma.*  
Short stay of Gandhi on arrival

Yesterday evening Gandhi has arrived from Switzerland. There was such a big crowd at the station on the occasion that the distribution of entrance ticket was suspended.

The Indian (the Mahatma) and the secretary with the followers stayed for about an hour and in that time the Mahatma had to affix his signature on the papers and documents of every kind which he did with visible happiness.

It was favourably commented the concession made to the old Mahatma and his followers of a first class cabin. He was saluted with applause at his departure. Mahatma was surrounded by some journalists who asked about his impressions of Italy; good impression, replied Mahatma, but that would be completed after the visit of Rome.

*Roma, 14 Dicembre 1931*

*Negli ambienti Vaticani si dice che il Papa non ha ricevuto Gandhi perché questi non ha voluto assoggettarsi ad un vestimento più dicente.*

In the vicinity of Vatican it is said that the Pope has not received Gandhi because he had refused to dress himself decently.

*Roma, 14 Dicembre 1931*

*Viene commentato negli ambienti diplomatici il fatto che il Capo del Governo abbia ricevuto Gandhi. Si fa rilevare che, grande o piccolo che sia la personalità di Gandhi, egli è pur sempre l'agitatore indiano ribelle al governo inglese amico dell'Italia ed è pur sempre colui che con la sua azione e la sua propaganda antibritannica in India ha dato un contributo non indifferente al male finanziario ed economico di cui oggi soffre il popolo inglese. Si osserva ancora che il Papa non ha avuto con la agitatore indiano i contatti ch'erano stati preannunciati.*

The reception of Gandhi by the Head of the government was a matter of comment in the diplomatic circles. It is pointed out that grand or insignificant may be the personality of Gandhi, he is an agitator who rebels against the English Government, the friend of Italy, and his action and anti-British propaganda has contributed significantly towards the bad finance and economy from which the people of England are suffering today. It is also observed that, as announced, the Pope had not contacted the Indian agitator.

*Roma, li 14 Dicembre 1931*

*E' stata molto commentata la notizia della visita della Principessa Maria a Gandhi. In generale si ritiene che la Principessa abbia voluto soltanto soddisfare una curiosità di vedere l'agitatore indiano; ma non è mancato chi ha attribuito la visita a presunte tendenze mistiche della Principessa medesima.*

The news of the visit of Princess Maria is being freely commented. In general it is considered that the Princess wanted only to satisfy her curiosity of seeing an Indian agitator but this does not belittle mystic tendency of the Princess which is attributed to her visit.

*Roma li, 14 Dicembre 1931*

*A proposito della mancata visita di Gandhi al Papa, il corrispondente del Times, sempre poco benevolo verso la Santa Sede, ha commentato dicendo che il papa non aveva ricevuto il santo indiano per paura della concorrenza". All'infuori della critica del corrispondente sudetio si sono date dai colleghi stranieri varie ragioni alla visita non avvenuta. In generale si dice che la Santa Sede ha chiesto che Gandhi si presentasse al Papa in costume adattato e che Gandhi ha rifiutato.*

In connection with the Gandhi's visit to Pope (which did not take place), the correspondent of Times, always little benevolent to the Sacred Seat, has commented saying that "the Pope has not received the great Indian saint because he was afraid of concurrence. Besides the criticism of the said correspondent, there are given several reasons by the foreign colleagues to the non-visiting by Gandhi. In general it is said that the Sacred Seat has asked Gandhi that he should present himself to the Pope in the proper dress and that the Gandhi has refused.

*Roma, 15 Dicembre 1931*

*Si riferisce che ieri sera, nei circoli dell'Ambasciata inglese, si discuteva con animazione, l'intervista del Direttore del "Giornale d'Italia" con Gandhi e malgrado l'autorità del giornalista, si metteva in dubbio le autenticità dell'intervista stessa, perché né a Londra, né a Roma all' "Azione Coloniale", Gandhi aveva fatto una vera e propria dichiarazione di guerra all'Inghilterra. So pretendeva nei medesimi circoli che, forse, Gandhi ha fatto qualche dichiarazione al Gayda, ma non in senso esplicito e che l'intervista rivette il desiderio dei circoli competenti italiani di aprirsi uno sbocco commerciale in India. L'intervista con Gandhi, per la parte in cui si accenna precisamente all'India come ad un grande sbocco per i prodotti europei, veniva messa in relazione con un recente articolo dell'On. Alberto De Stefani apparso nel "Corriere della Sera" e che trattava dei mercanti di altro Oceano.*

It is reported that yesterday evening, in the circle of English embassy, there was a lively discussion about the interview of the Director of "Giornale d'Italia" with Gandhi and inspite of the authority of the journalist, there was a doubt about the authenticiy of the interview itself, because, neither in London nor in Rome to the "Azione

Coloniale" Gandhi had made true and proper declaration of war against England. It was claimed in the same circle that Gandhi had perhaps made some declaration to Gayda, but not in that clear sense and the interview reflected the desire of the competent Italian circles to open trade in India. The interview with Gandhi, the part in which it is hinted that India as grand market for European products, was mentioned in relation with a recent article by Hon'ble Alberto De Stefani which appeared in the "Corriere della Sera" which also dealt with the markets of other Oceanic countries.

*Roma, 15 Dicembre 1931*

*A proposito di visite si rilevava che Gandhi si era interessato delle organizzazioni Balilla e del Partito, il che deve fare sospettare maggiormente Inghilterra contro di noi.*

In connection with the visit that Gandhi was interested in the organization of Balilla and of Party, this is what makes England doubt use

*Roma, 15 Dicembre 1931*

*Sulla venuta di Gandhi a Roma si diceva a Montecitorio:*

— *Lando Ferretti con il suo discorso di Aquila aveva fatto credere che il Duce non avrebbe ricevuto il Mahatma.*

— *Che il Papa non avrebbe ricevuto Gandhi lo si sapeva da un pezzo, dopo che Gandhi aveva attaccato il Cristianesimo, tanto da fare protestare i protestanti.*

— *Che Gandhi era partito irtate con l'Inghilterra.*

— *Per tutte queste regioni si credeva che Gandhi non sarebbe stato ricevuto dal Copo del Governo.*

— *Le dichiarazioni oltranziste contro l'Inghilterra di Gandhi fanno risaltare ancora di più l'importanza visita Gandhi Mussolini.*

On the arrival of Gandhi to Rome it was said in Montecitorio :

Lando Ferretti had made it to believe in his meeting at Aquila that the Duce (Mussolini) would not receive the Mahatma.

— That the Pope shall not receive Gandhi when it was known that Gandhi had attacked Christianity and protested the protestants too much.

- That Gandhi had left England annoyed.
- For all these reasons it was believed that Gandhi shall not be received by the head of the Government.
- The extreme declarations of Gandhi against England are given more importance than Gandi-Mussolini meeting.

16 Dicembre 1931

*Si riferisce che negli ambienti dell'Ambasciata britannica, in seguito alla dichiarazioni fatto da Gandhi al "Giornale d'Italia" e di cui a precedente segnalazione, si dice non essere improbabile che al suo arrivo a Bombay il Mahatma possa essere tratto in arresto.*

*Si deploра l'intervista di Gandhi perché non fatta a Londra e non rinviata a quando sarebbe giunto in India, ma accordata ad un giornale da devere essere considerato come neutrale nella questione; e si persiste nel ritenere che sarebbe stato il Gayda ad ampliare le dichiarazioni effettive del Mahatma perché nella sostanza, esse parlavano dell'accoglienza che L'India farà in avvenire a tutti i prodotti europei a danno di quelli britannici.*

It is referred in the British Embassy circle, after the declaration by Gandhi to the "Giornale d'Italia" reported earlier, that it is not improbable upon arrival at Bombay the Mahatma may be taken under arrest. They deplore the interview of Gandhi because why not he did this in London or did not postpone it until he reached India, but accorded this to a journal which should have been considered neutral in this question; they persist that Gayda should be held responsible for diffusing the declaration because in essence, they are talking of the reception India will accord in future to all the European products which will harm the British market.

Roma, 16 Dicembre 1931

*Il corrispondente del Times di Londra, ripetendo ieri sera vari episodi della visita di Gandhi a Roma, trovava che "sarebbe stato neglio se Gandhi fosse stato assolutamente ignorato dalle autorità italiane come fu ignorato dall'Ambasciata inglese. Quello poi che farà una certa impressione in Inghilterra è che sia andata a visitare l'agitatore indiano anche una Principessa di casa Savoia. Ma forse si è trattato soltanto di curiosità" concludeva il corrispondente.*

*Il fatto è che, dopo l'accenno a Gandhi fatto dall'On. Ferretti nel suo discorso di Aquila accenno tutt'altro che favorevole gli inglesi qui ritenevano che Gandhi sarebbe stato lasciato da parte. Ed è stato con manifesta sorpresa che essi hanno notato come il Gandhi abbia invece ottenuto qui accoglienza da parte di tutte le gerarchie del Partito. Si riconosce che, come privato poteva essere ricevuto dal Duce; ma non si vede perché abbia avuti tanti onori durante le sue visite alle istituzioni fasciste. Sulla visita al Duce poi si raccontava ieri sera fra i colleghi americani ed inglesi, quanto segue: "Il Duce, nei dodici minuti precisi in cui durò la visita non disse a Gandhi una sola parola, eccezion fatta quella di chiedergli quale impressione gli aveva fatta l'Italia; e tutte le volte che Gandhi faceva un accenno a chiedere egli qualche giudizio del Duce sulla questione indiana, il Duce lo preveniva facendogli qualche domanda sempre su questioni relative alla visita in Roma". Si afferma che questo andamento del colloquio sia stato riferito da persona presente ad esso.*

Correspondent of the London Times, repeating yesterday evening many episodes of Gandhi's visit to Rome, observed that "it would have been better if Gandhi could have been absolutely ignored by Italian authorities as had been done by the English Embassy. Instead of that one has the impression in England that the Princess of the House of Savoy had gone to visit an Indian agitator. But perhaps it was curiosity and nothing else", concluded the correspondent.

The fact is that, after the hint given to Gandhi by Hon'able Ferretti in his meeting of Aquila (hint was but favourable, the English thought that Gandhi shall be left by them. And it has been a great surprise to them that instead Gandhi was received with great welcome by all the hierarchy of the party. It is thought that Duce could have received Gandhi privately, but it is not understood why he got so much honour during his visits to the fascist institutions. On the visit to Duce it was related yesterday evening among the colleagues of American and English Embassy in these words: "The Duce did not say a single word to Gandhi during the visit, which lasted exactly for twelve minutes, except that of asking his impression of Italy; and Gandhi was asking his judgment (views) on the Indian question throughout the visit, the Duce was always avoiding and asked him something in connection with his Rome visit". It is affirmed that this colloquium of the meeting has been referred by the persons present there.

*Losanna, 17 Dicembre 1931*

*Il profeta indiano Mahatma Gandhi è stato per cinque giorni a Villeneuve ospito del pacifista comunista Romain Rolland. Il Mahatma ha tenuto una conferenza a Ginevra ed una a Losanna nelle quali si è dichiarato ultra pacifista ed ora accompagnato da tutti i pezzi grossi della social-democrazia svizzera, del "libero pensiero" etc. Sospettiamo che il Mahatma abbia idee comunistiche, in ogni caso rileviamo che un organo serio come la "Gazette de Lausanne" criticando le dichiarazioni stupide che Gandhi ha fatto circa gli armamenti della svizzera ha scritto testualmente:*

*"È tempo che Gandhi se ne vada, egli ha già abbastanza abusato della nostra ospitalità e può andare altrove a fare il profeta"*

*Abbiamo l'impressione che trattisi di un falso genio esaltato, che dai socialisti svizzeri è in ogni caso considerato come compagno.*

The Indian prophet Mahatma Gandhi has stayed for five days at Villeneuve as a guest of pacifist-communist Romain Rolland. Gandhi held a conference at Ginevra and one at Lausanne in which he declared himself to be ultra-pacifist and was accompanied by all big personalities of social-democratic Switzerland and the "free thinkers" etc. We are suspecting that Mahatma has communistic ideas, in any case we communicate that a serious organ such as "Gazette de Lausanne" criticising the stupid declaration made by Gandhi about armament of Switzerland has written precisely :

*"It is time, better if Gandhi goes, he has already made enough misuse of our hospitality and he can make his prophecy elsewhere."*

We have impressions that it dealt with the exalted false genius who was considered by the socialist swiss as a friend.

*Roma, 22 Dicembre 1931.*

*Apprendiamo il retroscena della mancata visita del Mahatma Gandhi al Papa. Gandhi chiese il colloquio al Papa dopo essersi assicurata l'udienza presso il Duce. Il Papa però ha creduto opportuno, preventivamente d'accordo con la Ambasciata inglese presso il Vaticano di rifiutare l'udienza con il pretesto che aveva i prossimi sei giorni completamente occupati e che quindi, avendo Gandhi fissata la sua partenza per l'indomani, non lo poteva più ricevere.*

*L'Inghilterra non ha voluto che Gandhi venisse ricevuto dal Papa perché lo stesso Gandhi desiderava questa visita per un puro e semplice fine politico. Essendo le missioni e tutte le altre opere del cattolicesimo in India affidate alla protezione del Governo inglese, una udienza del Papa a Gandhi sarebbe stata interpretata, per volonta di Gandhi, quale un primo passo verso un eventuale accordo diretto circa le missioni in India, cosa che avrebbe avvicinato a Gandhi anche i cattolici indiani.*

*Gandhi che non sarebbe stato compreso bene dalla stampa italiana e degli altri paesi, ha fatto a Londra un fiasco solenne ed è stato compromesso per l'opera machiavellica del Maharaja di Patiala.*

*Gandhi sarebbe un ricchissimo avvocato avventuriero che ha l'ambizione diventare l'imperatore delle Indie indipendenti.*

We have come to know the underhand dealing of Gandhi not visiting the Pope. Gandhi asked for a meeting with the Pope after being assured for an audience with the Duce. But the pope thought it proper, in agreement with the English embassy and Vatican, to refuse the audience on the pretext that he is fully occupied for the next six days and that Gandhi having fixed his departure next day he could not receive him.

England did not want that Gandhi should be received by the Pope because Gandhi wanted this visit simply for political reason. Existing missions and all other catholic work in India entrusted English government for protection, an audience of the Pope to Gandhi would have been interpreted as a victory to Gandhi, a first step forwards the eventual direct agreement about the missions in India which would have put Gandhi near the Indian catholics also.

Gandhi who could not be understood well by the Italian press, and by other countries, has solemnly failed in London and compromised with the machiavellic work of the Maharaja of Patiala.

Gandhi shall be a richest adventurous advocate who has the ambition of becoming the emperor of free India.

Genova, 23 Dicembre 1931

*Apprendo nel Consolato inglese che nei circoli governativi inglese regna una grande agitazione, a cause delle dichiarazioni fatte da Gandhi ad un redattore del "Giornale di Italia".*

*Si dice che queste dichiarazioni non corrispondano per nulla a quelle che lo stesso Gandhi avrebbe fatte prima della sua partenza dall'Inghilterra; a Londra si fa notare tendenziosamente che le dichiarazioni son state fatte "Dopo l'udienza avuta dal Capo del Governo Italiano"*

*Si dice anche che a Gandhi, il quale si trova ora in viaggio di ritorno, sarebbe stato inviato un telegramma per chiedergli una eventuale conferma delle sue dichiarazioni anglofobe, ed egli avrebbe risposto che tutto ciò che era stato stampato dal giornale italiano non è altro che frutto di fantasia.*

I have come to know from the English consul that a great agitation is prevailing in the English government circle because of the declarations made by Ganchi to a journalist of "Giornale d'Italia".

It is said that the declaration does not correspond to the one made by Gandhi before his departure from England; it is noted in England that the declaration has been made only "after the meeting with the head of the Italian Government".

It is also said that Gandhi, who is now on the return journey, should have been asked by telegram to confirm his declarations, and he would have replied that all that is printed in the Italian journal is nothing but the fantasy.

*In Vaticano dove la superstizione non dovrebbe esistere si va discutendo in questi giorni sulle pericolose qualità jettatrice di Gandhi. Si fa rilevare infatti che appena arrivato Gandhi in Inghilterra si ebbe il grave tracollo della sterlina, con le gravi conseguenze a tutti note la morte del compianto Arnaldo tre giorni dopo la visita al Duce ed il crollo della Sala Sistina due giorni dopo la visita. I maligni aggiungono che la visita deve aver recato afortuna anche a Mons. Pizzardo perché non si riesce ancora a collocarlo in un posto qualsiasi, tanto che si è costretti a tenerlo ancora al suo posto in attesa di sistemazione.*

*Altri invece assicurano che il Pizzardo avrebbe rifiutato il posto offerto personalmente dal Papa. Perché non intende allontanarsi da Roma per paura che la sua asseza gli renda impossibile o più fortuna la nomina a Cardinale.*

In Vatican where superstition should not exist, it is discussed in these days the evil-bringing quality of Gandhi. It is revealed in fact as

soon as Gandhi reached England sterling collapsed with all forms of serious consequences; the death of the bearded Arnaldo three days after the visit to Duce and the collapse of the Hall of Sistina two days after his visit. The evils are adding that the visit must have brought misfortune also to Mr. Pizzardo because he is not getting success to have the position so much that he is compelled to put himself in the position in the expectation of systematising it.

Others on the otherhand are sure that he would have refused the position offered to him by the Pope himself, because he does not want to be away from Rome because he is afraid that his absence would make impossible or would postpone his nomination to Cardinal.

*Roma, 31 Dicembre 1931*

*Il discorso pronunziato da Gandhi al suo arrivo a Bombai ha dato la impressione a tutto il mondo diplomatico che esso costituisca una smentita all . . . smentita data dal Maha:ma all'intervista pubblicata dal "Giornale d'Italia", in quanto esso non fa che confermare i propositi di ribellione esposti da Gayda.*

*Tuttavia si osserva che il Giornale di Piazza Soiarra, ritenuto ufficioso di Palazzo Chigi in tutti i paesi, avrebbe fatto meglio a non insistere con una pseudo corrispondenza da Londra sulla veridicità di tale intervista tanto sgradevole per un paese amico come l'Inghilterra.*

*Alla Logazione di Cecoslovacchia si dice che, forse, l'atteggiamento filogandhista della stampa italiana è determinato dagli ambienti industriali piuttosto che dagli ambienti politici, in quanto è ormai chiaro che li esportatori italiani guardano oggi con molto interesse al mercato Indiano.*

The speech delivered by Gandhi after his arrival at Bombay has given alarm to the diplomats all over the world that it constitute a denial to . . . denial of the interview of the Mahatma published by "Giornale d'Italia", in which he did not confirm the proposal of the rebellion exposed by Gayda.

Yet it is observed that the journal of Piazza Sciara, keeping its office at Palazzo Chigi in all the countries, would have done better in not insisting the so called correspondent from London on the truthfulness of such interview, done so much harm to a friendly country like England.

At the legation of Czechoslovakia it is said that perhaps the attitude of the Italian press is determined by the industrial atmosphere rather than by political condition, this much is clear by now that the Italian exporters are looking towards Indian market with great interest.

Genova, 9 gennaio 1932

*I giornali francesi riferiscono che in alcuni grandi cinematografi parigini è stato proiettato un film nel quale si assiste alle onoranze che furono rese a Gandhi, di passaggio in Italia.*

Uno di questi giornali scrive:

*“È veramente curioso constatare che davanti a Gandhi, apostolo della pace universale e del disarmo assoluto, il Fascismo non ha trovato di meglio che far sfilare schiere di fanciulli armati di fucile che trascinavano dei cannoncini e delle mitragliatrici. È vero che ciso di Gandhi si può scorgere un sorrisetto significativo”.*

The French journalists are referring that some big cinematographers of Paris have exhibited a film which projected the honour given to Gandhi in Italy.

One of these <sup>French</sup> journals writes:

*“Really it is curious to ascertain that before Gandhi, apostle of Universal peace and of absolute disarmament, the Fascism could not do better than to file a group of young boys armed with rifles, dragging cannons and machine guns. It is true that on the face of Gandhi one could see the significant smile.*

Roma, 21 Gennaio 1932

*Quello che ha “visto” Gandhi a Roma.*

*Il nostro informatore di Palazzo ci manda il seguente biglietto: Da forte indubbiamente so che Gandhi ha detto ad uno, prima di partire da Roma: “Ho visto cose orrende: piccole pani maneggiare piccolarmi”. Alludeva all rivista dei Balilla.*

*L'informatore ci dice non ha potuto sapere il nome di chi ha udito le parole di Gandhi perché aveva promesso Achi ha riferito al nostro al parlatore con Gandhi) di non dirlo. Ma l'amico nostro ci dice che la notizia è sicura.*

What Gandhi has "seen" in Rome.

Our informer of the Palace sends us the following note: "From undoubted source I know that Gandhi has said to somebody before his departure from Rome "I have seen horrible things: an armi of young eating pieces of bread." It refers to the parade of Balilla.

The informer tells us that he could not know the name of the listener because he had promised (who has referred to our spokesman with Gandhi) not disclose that. But our friend says that the news is true.

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